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STRIKING FOR WAGES.

BY GEORGE W. BUNGAY.

He's a blacksmith proud of his lot,
He strikes hard when the iron is hot.
The red sparks glow like fire-flies winging.
"Ten pound ten," can never be got,
Unless he keeps the anvil ringing.
Strike again.
"Ten pound ten!"

Working well with an iron will,
He can always foot the grocer's bill,
Good luck from every blow upspringing;
That is the way the pockets fill,
Money chimes to the anvil's ringing.
Strike again!
"Ten pound ten!"

He strikes for wages, and he gets
Money enough to pay his debts,
And more, for he keeps his hammer swinging.
Pride and poverty spread their nets
In vain for him whose anvil's ringing.
Strike again!
"Ten pound ten!"

His anvil chorus every day
Awakes the sleepers over the way,
And they hear him merrily singing,
"There's time to work, and there's time to play,
Now is the time for anvil ringing."
Strike again!
"Ten pound ten!"

Amid a shower of sparks he stands,
With an open face and honest hands,
Where the wasp of want cannot come stinging.
The house he built is not on sands,
It is as firm as the anvil ringing.
Strike again!
"Ten pound ten!"

When he grows old and bent and gray,
And long before, he can rest and play,
In golden years sweet pleasure bringing,
And hear his great-grandchildren say,
"There's music in the anvil's ringing."
Strike again!
"Ten pound ten!"

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The Plot Against Hawley;

OR, THE

PRISONER OF DESOLATION.

By LEON LEWIS,

AUTHOR OF "THE BOY MAGICIAN," "RED KNIFE," "THE BROKEN HOME," "EDDY'S SEARCH," "THE CLUB-FOOT BEAR," "MARK HEBER'S LUCK," ETC.

CHAPTER XI.

FOR GOOD, OR FOR EVIL?

It was not until Will. Hawley had rubbed his eyes again and again, without in any way impairing the gladdening vision which had so unexpectedly fallen upon his sight, that he could receive the evidence of his senses.

He was not mistaken. A ship was indeed entering Christmas Harbor!

And it seemed to Hawley that her coming was a direct intervention of Heaven in his favor.

The three pirates mentioned in Jude Breeling's strange chronicle had lived more than a year at Desolation before a ship had come to their relief. Jude himself—supposing the madman to be Jude, which Will. now fully believed—Jude himself had been there four years. But Will. had been upon the island less than twenty-four hours, and yet a ship had appeared already!

Dropping upon his knees, he gave utterance, in a few brief cries and murmurs, to the wild thanksgiving that flooded his soul. Then he bounded along the rocky shore, in the direction of the madman's abode, with all the speed of a glad and eager haste.

"A ship! a ship!" was the excited cry with which he burst into the little cabin.

"A ship?" repeated the madman, without arising from his bed, upon which he had thrown himself. "Of what nation is she, Admiral? French, English, or American? In other words, friend or foe?"

Will. was momently at a loss for a reply, it not having occurred to him to raise a question of that nature.

"I—I don't know, sire," he then stammered.

"That's the first point for our consideration," declared the madman, with unruffled serenity. "A ship arriving at St. Helena, Admiral, is as likely to menace us with evil as to offer us good. It becomes *me* to be suspicious, as I have already had the honor of informing you. The British Ministry may have decided to send me to Greenland or to the South Pole. The Bourbons may have heard of my defenceless situation, and sent a ship load of hired assassins to finish me. In any case, my dear Minister of State, we must be cautious. Art armed?"

"Only with the two hands that Nature has given me."

"Then take my sword."

"Your sword, sire?"

"The glorious sword of Austerlitz! 'Tis always with me. The sword is a part of the Emperor—as indeed of the Empire. I told Sir Hudson Lowe, you may remember, that he should never take my sword except from my dead body. Ho, ho! Here 'tis."

He drew from under his bed an enormous marine cutlass which had belonged to one of the three pirates, or to some other chance denizen of the island. It was rusty and hacked, and had been fearfully battered around the guard, besides losing several inches of its point. It may indeed have been a relic of the fierce fight between the pirates and the government cruisers, as narrated in Jude Breeling's chronicle.

At sight of this ancient "tool," the prime minister of St. Helena looked aghast.

"Has your majesty no other weapon?" he demanded.

"Nothing save this;" and the madman produced from a little cupboard an old case-knife, which had been sharpened to a point, and which was evidently a relic of the brig in which Jude Breeling had come to the island.

"I'll take the knife, sire," said Hawley promptly. "The glorious sword of Austerlitz is sacred to your majesty."

And with this he secured the knife upon his person, while the madman proceeded to attach the huge cutlass to his own waist with a thong of seal skin.

"You will, of course, keep out of sight, my dear Admiral, until you have learned who these people are," observed the madman. "It's more than likely that they mean mischief."

The first impulse of our hero was to smile at this spirit of precaution, but his second was to take a line of conduct from it.

"After all," he said to himself, "when I recall that pirates have watered and refitted here, this poor fellow's hint about being cautious may be worth adopting. A swarm of pirates may make the island their hiding-place, for all I know to the contrary. It's a hundred times as large as the city and county of New York, and has harbors in which all the ships in the world might ride at anchor. It may even be one of the hiding-places of the famous Malay Gunner himself! I think I'd better—"

His musings were interrupted by the madman, who suddenly leaped from his bed as nimbly as if it had been the gridiron of St. Lawrence, flushing with a swift excitement, and shouting:

"I have it, Admiral! We are betrayed again to the Prussians!"

"Betrayed, sire?"

"Beyond all question! That infernal madman who has been hanging around the island so long—the same rascal who assaulted you with a stone at Table Rock yesterday, my dear Hawley—that villain has spied out all our secrets, and sent a report to his government, and this ship has been sent here for some infamous purpose! But I will never submit to their odious domination again, never!" he added wildly, in the stern voice of wrath, as he flourished his old cutlass.

A thought of the mysterious assault he had suffered, added to his thoughts of pirates, was enough to confirm Will. in his resolve to be wary of everybody and everything, and it was in this spirit that he bowed assent to the observations of the madman, who added:

"Go and see what sort of a ship is entering the harbor, and come and tell me. If they are friends, we shall lose nothing by being cautious. If they are enemies, only caution and cunning can save us. Yonder, on that little shelf, is a glass Jupiter left there for me, the night he built this cabin, out of pity for my distresses—and a very good glass it is. Take it along with thee, Admiral. It will enable thee to make out sooner what the ship is."

Will. secured the glass in question, which was a good achromatic marine glass magnifying about three times, and which bore the initials of Jude Breeling, as well as the name of the brig in which he had come to Desolation. At the same instant his eyes encountered a further message from Jude Breeling. This message had been painted in bold letters, with the gall of a penguin or some similar liquid, upon the rude table which formed a chief article of the cabin's furniture, and read as follows:

> "Any sailor or other person coming to this hut is earnestly prayed to go up to the highest elevation beyond the pool of water to the westward of the head of Christmas Harbor, and take note of a written declaration which I have left there wrapped up in seal skin, and attached to an improvised flag-staff. JUDE BREELING."

"What's this, sire?" said Hawley.

"More of that madman's nonsense!"

"Did you ever notice, sire, how much the handwriting of this Jude Breeling, as exhibited in that singular document in my pocket, resembles the handwriting of your majesty?"

A faint flush crept into the madman's sallow face. He moved uneasily.

"I noticed the resemblance of the fellow's handwriting to mine," he acknowledged, "but as he is only a humble sailor, and as I am the Emperor Napoleon, I knew that the resemblance was a mere coincidence, and that he couldn't charge me with writing his wretched twaddle."

"Well reasoned, sire," said Will., turning away. "I will now go and see what sort of a ship is coming. I may be gone some little time—an hour or two—"

"O dear, yes. The ship will be an hour or two in coming to anchor, and in developing what she is. But come back as soon as you get the information, for I shall be anxious."

Will. bowed assent and slipped from the cabin. He was full of excitement and curiosity, but cool and perfectly self-possessed.

"To see without being seen is the first point of my tactics," he said to himself. "The idea of pirates haunts me. That 'other madman,' too, who tried to kill me yesterday—the thought of him makes me uneasy. The fellow may not be insane at all, but a pirate left here as a sentinel, or something of that kind. 'His majesty' is right. I must be cautious."

He was soon at the spot from which he had discovered the ship, and here he concealed himself carefully behind a group of rocks, peering out at the stranger through a narrow crevice.

From what quarter had she come?

She was tacking into the inner port, the wind being due west, but the best navigator in the world could not have told whether she had rounded Cape Français from the north and west, or whether she had come up into her present position upon a long tack from the eastward.

She was now well inside of Arched Point, however, and her build, rig and appearance began to develop with precision.

What was she?

The renewed attention of Hawley at once detected that there was something strange about her, and he studied her long and earnestly through his glass.

"She's not a whaler—neither an English nor an American whaler," he muttered. "May be a Dutch or Danish Indiaman. How low she is in the water! Must be loaded to her hatches with something heavy. Looks like a British ship of fifteen or twenty years ago. Has the heavy build of those old merchantmen. How odd looking she is!"

The ship had evidently been in a squall recently, for she had lost her main top-mast, her mizzen top-gallant mast, a number of sails, and about half of her bulwarks. Her rigging had been seriously damaged and disordered. Her lower courses had been furled, but in that baggy, slovenly manner which no true seaman can tolerate.

"She's poorly handled," added Will. "Can she be short of men?"

He looked along the deck searchingly, his wonder deepening at every glance.

"No," he continued. "She has a large crew. But how dead they all seem! I see only one of them doing anything—the one at the wheel. Half of them are sitting and lying about the deck, as if unable to move. There must be forty of them—twice as many men as a ship of that size needs to carry—and what a motley crowd they are! Several of them appear to be asleep, stretched out at full length upon the forward deck. One would say a lot of sick men, or men in the last stages of exhaustion."

The rising interest with which Will. had noticed these circumstances soon culminated in an ejaculation of uneasy wonder.

The sun was for once breaking now and then through the fogs and clouds of Desolation, as we have said, and its rays suddenly produced, at one of these breaks, a strange answering gleam from the deck of the stranger—the gleam of sabres, muskets, and other small arms, including pistols and bayonets!

And yet she was not a ship-of-war.

She hadn't even those painted port-holes by which merchantmen are so frequently ornamented.

"Halloo! here's a riddle!" was the mental ejaculation of our hero. "She's not a ship-of-war, and yet she has a crew that would answer for one, and every man seems to be armed. All this is suggestive of a pirate. But no pirate would sail in a tub like that, in these days of steamships. What is the secret of this ship? and what the character of those aboard of her?"

A number of men began moving slowly aloft at this juncture, evidently to take in sail, and a look of disgust upon Hawley's features became more marked than his looks of wonder.

"What a band of web-foots!" he exclaimed, bringing his glass to bear upon these men one after another. "A crowd of 'land-lubbers' upon their first trip into the rigging of a ship couldn't make a poorer show. They could give the penguins along the shore lessons in awkwardness."

The humorous view of the matter thus taken, its serious side presented itself to Hawley's mind in the following terms:

"There is something wrong here. I may have more to fear from the new-comers than to hope from them. The caution of 'his majesty' was most timely. It is well that I have followed it. Those men are not honest."

A host of curious facts and speculations was now crowding upon him.

He thought of the mutineers of the *Bounty*, and the thought was a timely reminder that ships are sometimes wrested from their owners and diverted from their true courses. Next he thought of the pirates who had captured the *Hornet* Indiaman, and robbed Mr. Aymar—"Uncle Tommy"—of his million, as narrated by Jude Breeling, and who had made their way to Desolation to refit and water. And finally he thought of Botany Bay, and of certain ships which had been seized on the way to Australia by the convicts aboard of them.

And thinking of these things, it occurred to Will. that the strange ship arriving in Christmas Harbor might owe its unusual looks to some such tragedy. There were certainly many sinister points about her.

Her working showed clearly enough to Hawley's practised eyes that there was no real sailor on duty aboard of her, neither in the cabin nor in the forecastle. It was morally certain to Will. that the men upon her deck were rather landsmen than seamen. And the small arms of all kinds so liberally distributed among them were in the highest degree suggestive.

"Ah! what a lurch was that!" suddenly cried Hawley. "The ship has ten feet of water in her hold!"

He comprehended all at a glance.

The ship had sprung a leak. Those aboard of her had been hard at work at the pumps for a longer or shorter period. They had thoroughly exhausted themselves in making the island, and had given over their exertions.

"They have no hope of saving the ship," muttered Hawley. "They will accordingly beach her."

The event proved the correctness of this supposition. The ship stood in beyond the rocky point on the north shore, where the *Flying Childers* had filled her water casks, and was kept steadily head on until she struck in three fathoms, ploughing her forward keel deep into the sandy bottom, and coming to a dead stop as gently as if she had been hove to in deep water.

A loud cheer arose from her deck, breaking the deep, strange silence which had until now reigned upon her from the first moment of her appearance in the offing.

"They'll never get her off," thought Will. "The madman and I are destined to have these men for neighbors for the present, whoever they may be. Fortunately the neighborhood is a large one."

A busy scene was immediately presented upon the ship. Those who had been sleeping awakened. Those who had been sitting or lying upon the deck arose to their feet. All hastened to procure food and drink, and then all wrapped themselves up and lay down to sleep.

Will. watched them a few minutes, and then hurried back to the madman, to whom the situation of affairs was soon reported.

"You don't really know, then, who or what those people are?" he questioned.

"Haven't the least idea, sire. They have strained their ship in a squall—and I don't wonder at it, after what I have seen of their seamanship. They must have carried too much sail in some blow that has visited them within a day or two past. At any rate, they have had to work for their lives at the pumps, and are utterly beaten out, and asleep."

"I will go with you, Admiral, and take a look at them," said the madman gravely, as he arose and drew the long trail of his vast seal-skin robe across his left arm. "I am puzzled at all you tell me. Am more and more at a loss to know whether I know anything or not. All asleep? Ho, ho! Astonishing!"

The puzzled state of the madman was intensified when he had reached the shelter of the group of rocks before mentioned, and made a long survey of the scene before him. He confessed that he hadn't the least idea as to the identity of the new-comers, their purpose and character, their destination, or the point from which they had come.

"Things are every day getting more and more snarled," he muttered despairingly. "I'm about at the end of my wits, Admiral. The one thing I do see clearly is, that we must be on our guard against these people. Let's sit here and watch for developments."

Will. assented to the proposal, but the watch proved a long one. Hour after hour glided away, while the couple speculated concerning the strangers, who lay as motionless as if dead.

At length one of the sleepers awoke, and, seeing the lateness of the hour, hastened to awake his companions.

A moment thereafter all was bustle.

A couple of boats—all that were left to the ship—were lowered and provisioned, and the whole party went ashore. Ascending to a sheltered vale behind the crest of one of the first slopes, they hurriedly formed a camp, bringing ashore several square sails, and making them serve as tents, with the aid of a piece of spar for a centre pole.

By the time the strangers had thus provided themselves with temporary habitations and taken possession of them, the sun had disappeared, the clouds had multiplied, banks of fogs had gathered upon the tops of the hills, and the chills of night, as well as its shadows, had begun to make themselves manifest.

An hour later, and by the time night had fully set in, all had become quiet at the camp of the new-comers, they having made a hasty repast from the liberal supply of provisions they had taken ashore, and resumed their sleep of utter exhaustion.

"They've all left the ship, I think," observed the madman, who had remained motionless for hours. "Why is this?"

"They evidently feel safer on the land," replied Hawley. "The spot they have chosen for their camp is a veritable stronghold. It couldn't be shelled from any point of the harbor."

"Do you think they are rogues, Admiral?"

"I do, sire—decidedly."

"Then what is our best course of action?"

"To hold ourselves aloof—to hide—to watch them closely. The first thing for me to do is to pay the ship a visit, if your majesty has no objections."

"I was thinking of that very measure. Had you better go alone?"

"I think I had, sire, while you go back to your cabin. These people are all asleep. They evidently take it for granted that no one save themselves is on the island. The ship is so near to the shore, that my swim to it will be a short one."

The madman shivered at the thought.

"The water is cold," he said. "You are a good swimmer, Admiral?"

"A fair one."

"You couldn't push off one of their boats, could you?"

"I think not. They have left them too far from the water. But the swim will not be difficult, and there is little danger. There are no sharks in the sea hereabouts—unless one has followed the ship in, and of that I must take my chances."

The madman shivered again.

"I hate to have you leave me," he declared.

"Oh, there's no danger," said Will. cheerily. "Besides, while I am busy here, you can get up a nice supper for yourself and for me. I haven't eaten a mouthful since morning."

"Thanks for the reminder, Admiral. I will act upon the suggestion. You shall have the best supper I can prepare."

A few observations and injunctions of mutual caution followed, and the two men then separated—the madman to return to his little cabin, and Will. to visit the mysterious vessel.

"It's an open question whether this ship is here for good or for evil," muttered the latter, as he proceeded along the shore. "I must try to solve the problem."

CHAPTER XII.

MISS ALICE J. DAIL.

The countenance of Mrs. Piper was so radiant when she arrived home from her early morning interview with Capt. Pedder, that Mrs. Hawley dismissed every anxiety about the stolen checks at sight of it.

"The money is safe, dear," the good landlady hastened to announce.

"You saw Captain Pedder, then?"

"Yes. Should the thief venture to present the checks, he will be arrested. In any case, payment of the checks will be stopped. Captain Pedder told me to assure you that you will not lose a penny."

Mrs. Hawley drew a long breath of relief.

"I am greatly obliged to him, I am sure," she murmured. "And to you too, my dear Mrs. Piper. It would seem from this that I was foolish to worry. But I have never had enough to do with banks and checks to my order, to see my way clear in such a sudden affliction as this robbery. Captain Pedder was not put out in any way by our application to him for assistance?"

"Put out? He couldn't have looked more pleased if you had given him a million of dollars. He seems very much interested in all that concerns you. I thought he would drop at sight of me."

"And why, pray?"

"Because his first thought was that something had happened to you. You should have heard him cry, 'Thank Heaven!' when I told him that you were well."

A soft flush mantled Mrs. Hawley's cheeks.

"He was surprised at the robbery, of course," added Mrs. Piper, laying off her things, "but he was less astonished at the thief's boldness than delighted at the prospect of being of further service to you. He was all eagerness to go for the police immediately, and I do believe the man forgot to eat his breakfast. What can be the matter with him? What is the secret of this devotion to your interests and well-being?"

"To judge by these questions, his conduct must have appeared strange to you."

"You are right; it did. It was not the conduct of a friend, not the conduct of a brother; but rather— You will not be offended?"

"Speak out—since you deem his conduct worth talking about."

"Very well, then; his conduct was that of a lover!"

Mrs. Hawley echoed the word, while the glow upon her countenance deepened.

"And of no ordinary lover, I will stake my life," proceeded Mrs. Piper, with the fluency of a pleasant astonishment. "He seemed to be the most earnest and devoted and unselfish of lovers. His whole soul seemed to be on fire at the thought of you!"

The blood receded from Mrs. Hawley's face, leaving her paler than ever.

"I am pained to hear this," she said simply.

"And why pained, if I may ask?"

"Because any lover-like conduct from Captain Pedder, or from any other gentleman, must necessarily be disagreeable to me."

"Of course—at least for the present. But I should have qualified my report of Captain Pedder's conduct by saying that the betrayal of his feelings was quite involuntary. I am sure that he loves you, but I am sure he did not mean to betray the fact to me."

"I am sorry the fact exists, Mrs. Piper. He—he once paid me some attention. He even proposed to me twice, my first refusal not seeming to him to be—what it was—irrevocable and final—"

"Ah! this accounts for his conduct of this morning."

"I would not have spoken of these circumstances, Mrs. Piper, even to you," murmured Mrs. Hawley, "if the conduct of Captain Pedder had not rendered this explanation necessary. I see from what you tell me that he is

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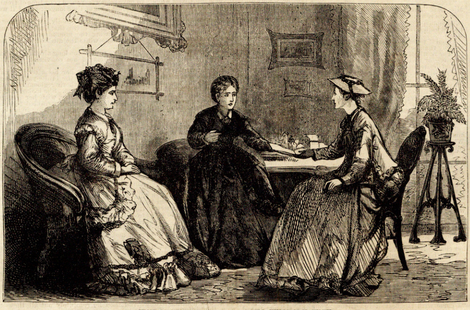

VISIT OF MISS ALICE J. DAIL TO MRS. WILLIAM HAWLEY.

alive to the fact that my poor husband is dead, and that—and that, in short, he counts upon resuming his former unsuccessful suit for my hand."

A considerable pause followed, during which Mrs. Piper looked fixedly at the fair, bright face before her.

"Well, one thing is certain," she finally said, with more emphasis than usual. "The poor fellow cannot be blamed for loving you. You are scarcely twenty, as beautiful as an angel, as good as you are beautiful—"

Mrs. Hawley interrupted the earnest eulogy with a gesture of pain.

"Don't," she said. "Were my husband living, I could endure your partial praises, for I should say to myself, 'If there is anything in them, *he* will think the better of me.' But now that he is gone, oh! how everything is changed! I do not want any man's admiration, and still less any man's love. I should shrink from being sought in marriage by any man, as certainly as I would shrink from a deadly poison. I am sacred to my husband. A cruel fate has made me a widow, but I shall never cease for a moment to be a wife."

Mrs. Piper had not yet seated herself, and at these words she advanced to Mrs. Hawley's side and pressed a reverent kiss upon her forehead.

"I understand you, dear," said Mrs. Piper. "You will never marry again."

"Oh, never!"

"I was excusing Captain Pedder's love, and not recommending it," continued the landlady. "The poor fellow is rather to be pitied than blamed. Finding himself again in your presence, all his old love for you asserts itself; and he would be more or less than man to remain blind to the fact that you are now a widow, and free to marry again. No true woman in your place would think of marrying again at present, but any true woman in your place might look forward to marrying again in the future, without offence to any law or sentiment, human or divine."

"I agree with you, Mrs. Piper. Any widow may marry again, and many do marry with both reason and honor. For instance, if a young girl marries without due consideration, or without knowing her own heart, and is early bereaved, it is perfectly natural that she should marry again. If her first venture in the matrimonial lottery should be a blank, and death should set her free, she cannot be blamed for contracting a second marriage. But my case is not of that kind, Mrs. Piper. In Mr. Hawley I found the one congenial spirit that completed my being. He will be mine in eternity as in time. He is absent from me for the rest of my days on earth—absent from the ken of these mortal eyes, I mean—but his place in my heart can never be taken by another."

If Mrs. Piper did not fully share this view of her young friend's widowhood, she could at least comprehend and respect it.

"And it is because I feel this way," added Mrs. Hawley, "that I am pained by what you tell me about Captain Pedder. If he is really cherishing his former sentiments for me, he is dooming himself to certain disappointment, and it may become my duty to avoid him."

"I am sure that he has the ordinary self-respect of a gentleman," said Mrs. Piper. "Should you find that he is really building a hope upon the fact of your being a widow, it will be easy for you to say a few words, in due time and place, that will take any hope of the kind from him. And once let him comprehend that he can never become your husband, he will remain, I doubt not, a constant and sincere friend—as he has already in fact shown himself."

"You think well of him I see."

"Certainly. Why should'nt I? He appears to me to be a perfect gentleman. Do you not have every respect for him? every faith in him?"

"I *ought* to have, I suppose," said Mrs. Hawley, with visible self-reproach. "Has he not been very kind to me? Was not his conduct in assisting me to that sum of two thousand dollars very generous? And yet—"

She hesitated, in painful confusion.

"And yet," repeated Mrs. Piper suggestively.

"And yet I distrust him as I distrust no other person in the world," said Mrs. Hawley emphatically. "I shrink from him as from a contamination. My whole soul cries out against him whenever I meet him. I cannot rid myself of the thought that he has always presented himself to me under a mask. My instinct has always warned me against him. I will even confess that I have always feared him. It was for these reasons that I rejected him, and declined to receive him as a suitor."

The countenance of Mrs. Piper betrayed the astonishment these words caused her.

"I have struggled against these feelings, of course," continued Mrs. Hawley. "So far as I know, there is not the least act in Captain Pedder's life, nor the least thought in his heart, which could furnish any excuse for them. But I have not been able to divest myself of the fear that he is false-hearted. I have even had fears of him that I did not dare mention to my husband. When he was interesting himself in my husband's promotion to the *Flying Childers*, and when all his conduct seemed so good and generous, I had my secret misgivings. I even said to myself, 'What if Captain Pedder should have some base motive under all this fair seeming? What if he should be pursuing some horrible purpose?' And yet until this hour, Mrs. Piper, I have never lisped a word of these feelings, not even to my husband."

There was a ring at the door bell at this moment, and the couple retired from the front to the back parlor, Mrs. Piper closing the folding doors between the two apartments. They had scarcely seated themselves again when Jenny, the tidy chamber-maid of the house, brought a card to Mrs. Hawley, with a somewhat mysterious air, and even with unwonted prudence, for she closed the door between the ladies and the caller.

"Miss Alice J. Dail," read Mrs. Hawley aloud. "Do you know her, Mrs. Piper?"

"I never heard the name before."

"Nor have I. Are you sure the card is for me, Jenny?"

"Yes, ma'am. But I don't know what to make of the young lady, ma'am. She's a little, shy, sickly looking thing, not more than eighteen, I should think. Her face is as white as a sheet, and her eyes as large as tea-saucers. She's in some great trouble, I'm certain. I never saw a more distressed looking object. Her voice was so weak and hesitating that she had to tell me three times before I could make out who she wanted to see."

"And you must have made some mistake after all."

"She may bring a message from 'Deacon Abraham Sanborn,' our robber," suggested Mrs. Piper. "Where is she?"

"In the hall, ma'am. She gave me such a fright that I forgot to ask her into the parlor. I do believe she's troubled with fits—"

"Show her in here, Jenny," interrupted Mrs. Hawley, with an anxious look upon her face.

Jenny turned away.

"Remain with me, Mrs. Piper," added Mrs. Hawley, as she pressed her hand to her heart and tried to compose her features. "The presence of this strange woman, or what Jenny has said about her, gives me a shock. I—I fear—I know not what."

The next instant the caller so freely described by Jenny was ushered into the apartment. She responded very nearly to the preceding description. She was pale, trembling and excited.

Mrs. Hawley arose and advanced a few steps, exchanging a little nod with the newcomer, and then she said:

"Please be seated, Miss Dail. You seem in feeble health. I am Mrs. Hawley. You desired to see me?"

Miss Dail shook like a leaf, as she sank into the proffered chair.

"You—you are Mrs. William Hawley?" she murmured, in a scarcely audible voice.

Mrs. Hawley bowed.

"The—the wife of Mr. Hawley, late of the *Flying Childers?*"

"The same, Miss."

Miss Dail trembled still more violently, and turned her glances upon the landlady.

"This lady is Mrs. Piper, an intimate friend of mine," added Mrs. Hawley. "You can speak freely before her."

Miss Dail aroused herself.

"I—I hardly know how to begin," she said.

"Come at once to the point, please," said Mrs. Hawley. "What have you to say to me?"

Miss Dail drew from her pocket a copy of the New York *Herald*, folded in such a way as to bring into view a certain advertisement, around which pencil marks had been drawn.

"Please read those few lines," she said.

Mrs. Hawley accordingly read aloud:

"A young lady whose only brother is about to sail upon a long voyage, and who does not like to be left alone in her house, desires the companionship of a young lady of good social position during her brother's absence. A good home given for such society. Address Miss R. P., Box 183, *Herald* office."

The reading of these lines finished, both Mrs. Hawley and Mrs. Piper looked at Miss Dail, as if demanding an explanation.

"The 'Miss R. P.' of this advertisement is Miss Ruth Pedder, the sister of Captain Luke Pedder, of the *Flying Childers*," said Miss Dail. "As you will see by the date of the paper, this advertisement was printed a week before the *Childers* sailed upon that fatal voyage, Mrs. Hawley, that you have such terrible reasons for remembering?"

"Well?" was all Mrs. Hawley could say, such was her wondering interest.

"I answered this advertisement," continued Miss Dail, "saw Miss Pedder and her brother, and was received into their house as the desired companion. And from that day to this I have been living at their house in Bleecker street."

"Well?" repeated Mrs. Hawley again, more sharply than before.

"The result of this intimacy with the Pedders is—for I will come at once to the point, as you desire me to do—the result of this intimacy with the Pedders is, that I have made, as I fear and think, a terrible discovery: the discovery, in a word, Mrs. Hawley, that you are the victim of a plot between Miss Pedder and her brother; that you have been imposed upon; that your husband is not dead—"

Mrs. Hawley uttered such a cry of torture that Miss Dail paused in her rapid utterances, abashed and frightened.

"Not dead?" repeated Mrs. Hawley, in a hoarse whisper. "Why, what do you mean? What are your motives in coming here with such a declaration?"

"She is certainly crazy," whispered Mrs. Piper.

"Do I not KNOW, beyond all question, that my poor husband is dead?" went on Mrs. Hawley, almost fiercely. "Did not Mr. Moody know it? Did not Mr. Thompson know it? Have I not here, at hand, a declaration of my husband's death, signed by everybody aboard of the *Flying Childers* whose signature was worth having?"

And with this the agonized lady thrust under the eyes of Miss Dail the formal certificate Capt. Pedder had given her.

The visitress gazed long and earnestly at this formidable document, and then reeled in her chair. It seemed as if she would faint.

"Oh! I am so thankful!" she cried. "It has been such agony to think otherwise! I see that I was mistaken! The words I have overheard meant something else, or did not mean anything! Miss Pedder and her brother are not guilty of that monstrous wickedness! You will excuse me, Mrs. Hawley, for troubling you?" she added, arising to her feet. "I came with the best of intentions. Your husband is really dead, then? Thank heaven for this relief. Excuse me. I will go."

And in a very whirlwind of emotion Miss Dail hurriedly took her departure.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

HAVE AN OBJECT.

BY KATE MERIDEN.

I have an object in the remarks I have just made? Certainly, sir, I have an object. It would have been much better for me if I had had an object at an earlier period of my existence. The not having one came near ruining me, as it has hundreds before. Hear my story, and judge for yourself.

My only sister, with a brother and myself, dwelt with our parents in the family mansion, which had sheltered at least three successive generations, and was still regarded by several of the ancient members of our family as a sure retreat, when jaded and worn with the frivolity of the world, or the close quarters of a fashionable watering place.

Among those who favored us was my father's eldest sister — my father was the youngest of his family. This lady had been left a widow by her husband at the age of fifty, and was the sole possessor of a comfortable fortune, a set of diamonds, and two very small dogs.

So much for our aunt and her possessions. I may now be allowed to speak of my brother, my sister, and by no means least, of myself.

From the moment when I first drew my breath, I was called a handsome child, and as I advanced in years the fact grew upon me, until I came to consider my brother, a plain looking youth, with a decided stoop, of but small account where my interests were concerned. As for my sister, at the best or worst, as you will, she was but a girl, to whom the art of dressing and a few accomplishments were necessary. When she arrived at a proper, or improper age, as the case might be, she would settle down, as her mother had done before her.

My brother ought to have interested me, for to one less absorbed in self he would have been a study of great interest. Left to his own resources for amusement, he would spend hours in making rude sketches of the surrounding objects, using for coloring the blossoms which he gathered from the garden. Indeed, as time passed on, it proved to be the object of his greatest ambition to become a great painter, and his plain features would become positively handsome with a glow of light, as he discussed the subject.

At such times our mother would turn away with a sigh for poor James' mad idea, and many were the intervals which our good parent spent in censuring herself for allowing him to entertain this extraordinary notion, which in his case must surely end in failure.

Self-assertion is a wonderful thing in a family. Proportionately as *poor Jamie's* efforts were disparaged, so was I held up as an object of unbounded admiration.

I do not mean to infer that I had no just claim to the attention of my family, for after this lapse of years I may admit without vanity that, mentally as well as physically, nature had been lavish of her gifts to me.

I had reached my sixteenth year, and under the supervision of our good rector, was preparing for my collegiate course, when one morning, as we sat over a late breakfast, it was announced that our good aunt, her dogs and her diamonds, had arrived.

Our relative was not looking well; she sipped her coffee with a languid air, complained of the draught from an open window, and motioned to James to close the casement.

She had been one of the few who had condescended to bestow more than a passing thought upon the poor fellow. He was generally believed to be her favorite. But unfortunately some new idea in the way of painting had seized upon him. Her request was twice repeated. Then she turned to me, with the word *stupid* upon her lips.

I sprang forward, closed the window, and received her thanks. It was noticeable that from that time her interest in him seemed to diminish, while I rose in her favor, and was chosen on all occasions to execute her pleasure. Are there any such things as trifles? If there are, some of these trifles have turned the destiny of nations.

The incident which I have just related had a bearing on the destiny of two individuals at least: my brother and myself.

Our aunt's health did not improve. As the season advanced she grew weaker; she finally kept in her own apartments, where, at her request, I visited her daily.

One night our household was thrown into a state of excitement and alarm, by the intelligence that she had been seized by a fearful paroxysm, which might terminate her life before morning.

She rallied from the attack, but was so reduced as to leave but little hope of her ultimate recovery. She seemed to realize her condition, and toward evening of the following day sent for her lawyer, who, together with our father and another acquaintance, received her last will and testament.

This being accomplished, she ceased to evince any interest in material objects, and sank rapidly. On the 19th of September she died.

After the funeral, the family assembled to hear her will read, when, most unfortunately, it proved that I was left sole possessor of her fortune, her dogs and diamonds.

I went to college, and succeeded in passing an examination and gaining a diploma more from the natural ability which I possessed, than from any earnest personal application or effort; for, having plenty of money, more than half of my time was wasted with companions as reckless and indolent as myself.

During this interval, I was regularly the recipient of a budget of home news, and occasionally was favored with a letter from my brother James.

In one of these epistles he had spoken in the most glowing terms of a new friend whom he had found, in the person of a stranger who had lately appeared in their midst.

The report from the other members of the family represented the stranger to be a man past the prime of life, whose wild features and flowing beard gave him the appearance of a bandit; and as he did not seem to have any particular occupation, and gave no account of himself, it was but safe to avoid him.

What then was their anxiety, wrote my sister, to find that poor dear James was actually infatuated with this strange wild man, and would spend hours in his habitation, an abode little better than a hut. But there was no use talking. The poor boy had grown positively willful, and what his infatuation would end in, time alone would tell.

Three months after this communication reached me, I received another, informing me of my brother's departure with his strange friend.

My sister wrote that they had fought against it with their united strength; that the house had become a scene of contention and confusion on his account; and that finally, for the sake of peace, our parents had reluctantly consented to his travelling abroad with the stranger, charging him to remember that if any harm came to him, or the good name of the family was disgraced, through the strange companionship which he had chosen, they themselves were not answerable. They had done what they could to prevent it.

Two years glided away. During this period I too had visited the old world; yet so far from my stock of information being increased by my travels, I came back jaded and dispirited, with scarcely a dollar in my purse, having managed to spend the last farthing of my aunt's fortune.

During those months abroad, I had not once heard of my brother; and when I arrived at home, I found the family preparing to welcome us both.

They talked in an encouraging strain about the progress *poor Jamie* was making with his strange friend, who, they informed me, had proved to be a painter instead of a bandit. Our dear mother went so far as to express an opinion that after all, the ugly looking man with the grizzled locks might do her poor boy some good. She believed he intended to return with Jamie, and had one of his wonderful pictures to exhibit. At any rate, she no longer feared to welcome him to her fireside, as her son's friend.

Jamie came home. The strange painter accompanied him.

The poor boy was looking uncommonly well, and though at times, when he was somewhat weary with the brisk exercise which he was in the habit of taking daily, the slightest possible stoop was perceptible, yet his whole being seemed to have undergone some great change; the sallow, care-worn look had entirely disappeared, and there were times when his plain features were positively glorious in their expression.

I had taken an office in the place, and to while away the hours, which hung heavily upon my hands—my patients were by no means numerous—I perused the daily papers with a zeal that might have won the approbation of their editors generally. One of the subjects I found, that at that time was claiming the particular attention of the cultivated public, was the art of painting. I read long and laborious criticisms on several works, said to be gems of art, and among these articles noticed a glowing tribute that had been copied from a foreign journal, concerning a painting of Saint Peter's at Rome, that was about to be exhibited in our midst.

I immediately connected my brother's friend Her Von Bosse, the man with the grizzled locks, with this painting. It was his work, and something akin to a feeling of pride swelled my breast when I thought of him as *my brother's friend*. I determined I would see the picture.

It was with difficulty that I made my way through the throng that pressed up to the entrance of the hall where the picture was exhibited, but armed with a passport from Her Von Bosse, I at last succeeded in gaining an entrance.

Murmurs from the common herd of "Beautiful!" "Light!" and "Shade!" fell on my ears as I stood before the breathing canvas, and held my breath to catch the echo of the vailed worshippers who knelt before the shrine of the vaulted temple. All I could conceive of awe, of grandeur, of subdued religious light, was there, yet not to be expressed in words. A prayer, a reverent, holy prayer, would not have been sacrilegious there.

There were other true worshippers besides myself—bright eyes that were filled with tears, and lips motionless—but the figure that at last riveted my attention was my brother's.

He stood apart from the crowd, his face radiant with an expression it would be vain for me to attempt to describe. There might have been something of triumph, as though, after a great struggle, a grand victory had been achieved; yet there was no self-glorification—only a holy, happy light, that gave a marvelous beauty to his otherwise plain features.

I needed not to learn from the throng that pressed around to detain his retreating footsteps, that it was *his* picture — the work to which my brother had given the last twelve months of his study abroad; for without having heard a syllable, at that moment I would have been willing to have staked all that I valued to that effect; and it was with a mingled feeling of pride for my brother's success, and self-abasement on my own account, that I turned my steps homeward.

With my superior physical strength and personal advantages, and the care and favor that had been lavished upon me, what had I done? What had I achieved?

Much as I had been admired and deferred to by the foolish partiality of my family, I had discovered that I was the subject of no man's overwhelming admiration; that every individual was busy with his own affairs; that if I now sank discouraged upon the threshold of a life of fierce competition, I might as well be a dead man, for the world had no use for me, and I might as well retire from the scene of action, or be trampled upon; that if I wished to be noticed, I must make myself noticeable. In other words, I must *have an object*. I am happy to say that at last I am in earnest. I have chosen one. The divine art of healing is *my object*. Good-night, sir. You have not troubled me; you are perfectly welcome to my remarks.

THE LOST BRIDE.

BY AMY RANDOLPH.

"My good woman, it strikes me that all this theatrical ranting and entreaty is quite out of place. I am not to blame because you are poor. I am not responsible because you cannot keep the rent going. It is very natural that I should want my money, and I have already borne with you longer than most landlords would do."

Mr. Carlyon stood there straight and stately, with features as accurate as if cut in cameo, and cold sparkling blue eyes, in whose depths lingered no single gleam of mercy or forbearance, while diamond studs shone in his spotless linen, and a great ring of brilliants caught the afternoon sunshine in its countless facets.

"But is it true, sir," faltered the Widow Bryan, "what your agent says—that the little bits of furniture, and the bed my Michael died on, is to be seized for the thrifle o' rent?"

"I do not know what you call a trifle," said Mr. Carlyon. "It is more than a year since you paid anything; and what my agent says I fully sanction and uphold."

"And my Nelly fadin' into the grave wid yon wearyin' cough? and the little fatherless child—her cryin' out for the bit and the sup that I haven't got to give them? Mr. Carlyon, you're a rich gintleman, wid land and wid money, an' they say you're to marry the fairest lady that the sun ever shone on—have mercy on us, as ye'd ask the Good Father to have mercy on you, in your time of trouble. Wait just a bit of time longer; sure I'll work night and day to—"

He shook his head coldly, as he sprang on the milk-white horse that had been impatiently pawing the ground and tossing its snowy mane while the altercation had been going on.

"I have waited too long already," he said. "Further delay I am convinced would be worse than useless."

Mrs. Bryan shook her fist after him, as he trotted away down the bridle-path, already obscured by the gathering gloom of an impending thunder-storm. She looked not unlike some avenging fury, with her iron-gray hair blowing about her wrinkled face, and the fierce light of anger glowing in her eyes, while with one hand she held the folds of a picturesque scarlet shawl about her bent and aged form.

And with the moan of the rising wind among the trees, and the patter of big raindrops on the leafage of the dense summer woods, came the echoes of her shrill voice:

"Aye, ride on, with your gay white horse, and your diamonds, Clarence Carlyon; but God's curses will follow you. Ye can't ride away from *them*, sir; not if ye put a thousand spurs into his sleek sides. The curses of a widow—the curses of a dying girl, that can't die in peace for you and yours! It's thrue that we're poor, and have no friends, but God sees it all. Yes, ye're ridin' straight on to His vengeance! I can see it, though you can't."

Instinctively Mr. Carlyon shook his bridle-rein, and shuddered. The wind was chill among the sunless forest aisles, and Selim, shying to one side at a sudden blue-white gleam of lightning, seemed as glad as his master to get out of reach of the sound of the old woman's infuriated execrations.

"I'm sorry I ever bought that tenement property," mused Mr. Carlyon, as he rode on. "It has been ten times the trouble it is worth. I will tell Stileson to put it in the market to-morrow."

And then he resolutely put all these unpleasantnesses out of his mind, and began, instead, to think of Antoinette Dupergué, the beautiful young French heiress whom he was the next week to wed.

Miss Dupergué was staying at Holyhead Hall, a few miles beyond, where the wedding was to take place among her friends and relations, for Antoinette was herself an orphan, with no settled home. Artists raved about her pure, Madonna-like beauty. Poets sang lyrics in her praise. Even sober business men lost their balance when exposed to the wondrous witcheries of her melting velvet-black eyes, and lustrous jetty hair, and skin like the creamy chalice of an Easter lily.

And Clarence Carlyon had won her away from them all. No wonder that his meditations were very bright, as he trotted on to Holyhead Hall; no wonder that neither thunder nor lightning nor driving rain had power to chill the warmth of his happy lover heart!

As he approached a gloomy spot in the road, where it took a sudden and abrupt turn, among gloomy cedar copses and dark green thickets of American laurel, Selim shied again—so suddenly, this time, as nearly to unseat his rider. And in the same instant, Mr. Carlyon, looking ahead to discover, through the gloom of storm and tempest and overarching woods, what it was that had so startled his usually trustworthy steed, fancied for one second that Antoinette Dupergué stood at the turn of the road, all in white, with floating jetty curls, and a stalk of white lilies in her hand.

Only for a second, however. The white rush of sheeted rain dissolved the shadowy fancy the next minute, and he saw that the stalk of lilies was only the white clusters of a clematis vine, which, torn from its clinging supports by the storm, waved wildly to and fro in the air. He smiled to himself to think how nearly he had been deceived by the delusion.

"Gently, Selim; gently, old fellow," he said, patting the horse's neck. "We are both of us inclined to be a little fanciful to-day. If I were at all subject to nerves," he added mentally, "I should say that the demoniac bawls of yonder ranting old hag had startled them."

He rode on, and soon reached Holyhead Hall. At the moment in which he checked his steed at the stone portico with its solid flight of hewn steps, the sun broke out brilliantly once more.

"A good omen," he said gayly, to himself.

But the pale, scared face of Agatha Holyhead at the door, told another tale.

"Such a storm!" she panted, "such a fearful storm!"

"Has it been so bad? But what does a little rain amount to?" he cried, flinging his reins to an advancing servant.

"But the lightning has struck down in the woods by the grotto—and—and we cannot anywhere find Antoinette!"

"Agatha," reasoned Mrs. Holyhead, "do not be so foolish. Probably your cousin has been out for a walk—one of her sketching expeditions, most likely—and has taken shelter in one of the cottages down there."

But at that instant an affrighted gardener came rushing up the steps.

"Ma'am, if you please, Miss Dupergué is sitting in the summer house—and she won't answer me!"

Almost before a minute had elapsed, Clarence Carlyon had made his way through the dripping shrubberies to the summer-house, one half of whose vine-festooned sides were torn away by the blasting finger of the lightning.

It was as the man said. Antoinette Dupergué sat on the rustic seat, all in white, with a long stalk of lilies in her hand, quite dead!

"Struck by lightning!" gasped her terrified aunt, as she marked the single blackened spot, scarcely larger than a pin's head, on the girl's temple.

She sat there almost as if she had fallen asleep among the honeysuckle trails, so pure and peaceful was her face; the very lilies were not disturbed in their whiteness—but she was dead by the scorching touch of God's fire!

And Clarence Carlyon, standing there bowed down by the weight and suddenness of his awful affliction, remembered poor Bridget Bryan's words:

"Ride on, but God's curses will follow you! You are riding straight to His vengeance. I can see it, though you cannot."

The prophecy had come true!

WIT AND HUMOR.

"CAN you lend me five hundred dollars?" asked a city fop of an old banker. "What security can you give me?" "My own personal security." "Very well; get in here," said the banker, lifting the lid of a large iron chest. "What do you want me to get in there for?" exclaimed the fop, drawing back in alarm. "Because that's where I keep all my securities," grimly replied the banker; whereupon the fop hastily withdrew.

A CONNECTICUT lover, young and enthusiastic, who sang and played for nearly two hours before the house of his lady love the other evening, was electrified—that is, shocked—after a short pause, by a cordial "Thank you," gracefully pronounced by the "other fellow," who appeared at the window.

"So, John, you've taken the pledge." "Well, Jake, I have." "For all that, John, I would not like to trust you alone with a pint of whiskey in your room all night." "Well, Jake, I should have no fears for *you*, under such circumstances, but I should have grave apprehensions for the whiskey."

THE worst charade ever made: My first is the name of a peculiar kind of butter, my second of a peculiar kind of liquor, and my whole is the name of a portion of a familiar weapon: What is my name? Answer—Ramrod. Ram is the peculiar kind of *butter*, and rod goes for the *lick her*.

"I USUALLY get paid for telling what I know!" pompously exclaimed a conceited lawyer to a friend who casually asked him his opinion on a legal point. Handing him a fifty-cent stamp, the friend said, "That's all right; just tell me all you know, and then give me my change."

A WITNESS, in describing certain events, said, "The person I saw at the head of the stairs was a man with one eye named Jacob Wilkins." "What was the name of his other eye?" spitefully asked the opposing counsel. The witness was disgusted at the levity of the audience.

AN "artist in marble" elaborated what he considered a triumphant statue of that king of beasts, the lion, and sent it to compete for a prize at an exhibition of statuary. He received the "first premium for a beautiful sleeping bull pup in marble."

AN unfortunate operator in a great wheat "corner" in Chicago thus records the different stages of the speculation: "First stage—plenty money, no wheat; second stage—plenty wheat, no money; third stage—no wheat, no money."

A MINISTER made an interminable call upon a lady of his acquaintance. Her little daughter, who was present, growing weary of his conversation, at last asked, in an audible whisper, "Didn't he bring his amen with him, mamma?"

A YOUNG lady sent a written order for a lot of music to a music-seller, and being apprehensive that her spelling was not just right, she added this postscript: "Yew must exkews this letter, as I pla by noat but spel by ere."

A SARATOGA notability, who has his rooms at a hotel draped in mourning for his mother, remarked the other day to some sympathizing visitors that he "wouldn't have lost her for five hundred dollars."

A LITTLE girl up town joyfully told her mother, the other day, that she had found out where they made horses—she had seen a man in a shop just finishing one of them, for he was nailing on his last foot.

"SPIT on your hands, John," said a carman to his assistant, as they were moving a heavy stove for a lady up town. "O, don't do that!" exclaimed the lady, "here's a spittoon!"

A LITTLE boy three years old gave a reason for his infant brother's good behavior as follows: "Baby doesn't cry tears because he doesn't drink any water, and he can't cry milk!"

"CORN bread!" said an English waiter, in a London restaurant, to a Yankee guest—"corn *bread!* We haven't any, sir; but isn't it corn beef you mean?"

A NEWSBOY being asked, on a rainy day, what he'd take to carry a message from Bull's Head to the Battery, replied that he'd take a coach.

THE police are said to be like the rainbow because they never appear till after the storm.

WILD oats are the only crop that grows by gaslight.

CURRENT ITEMS.

As a train on the Montgomery and Erie Railroad, near North Goshen, was running at a high rate of speed, it came upon two railroad bars of iron, placed parallel with the track, with one end of each elevated so that the pilot of the engine would strike them. One of the rails was lifted squarely off the track, while the other one was thrust into the wood of the pilot, and in that dangerous position was carried until the train was brought to a stop. The object of the villains who placed the obstructions on the track was supposed to be to plunder the train during the confusion which would follow the wreck. No punishment could be too severe for such outrages as these.

A SINGULAR accident befell a farmer of Wyoming, a few days since. Stepping into his garden, he saw some chickens picking at a rare plant, and catching up a stick he rushed at them. While at full speed he encountered a clothes line, which hit him in the mouth. His momentum carried the line to its fullest tension, and the rebound threw him eight or ten feet. As the line left his mouth it took out three teeth and all that part of the jawbone in which they were imbedded.

A ROCKING-CHAIR fan has been invented, which during the hot season will be particularly grateful. An elastic curved arm is fastened to the back of the chair, and bends at a convenient distance over the head of the occupant. To the end of this is attached a swinging fan, which, on the slightest movement, swings to and fro, without any exertion on the part of the sitter.

IT is said a wild man has been seen at San Pedro, Fla., who is entirely covered with hair, and as wild and fleet as a buck. When first seen he was feeding on whortleberries, but as soon as made aware of the presence of any one, he ran into the swamp. He is supposed to be some fellow who deserted during the war, and sought shelter in the swamp.

A LITTLE city boy, boarding in the country, getting tired of drawing his baby brother around, tied the wagon to the tail of an old mare that was cropping grass in the yard, and sought to drive her gently to and fro; but she became frightened, ran around the yard, upset the baby wagon, and nearly killed the baby before she could be stopped.

A WHEAT-FIELD is reported from California as being eight miles wide and thirty-five miles long, which makes an area of one hundred and seventy-nine thousand and two hundred acres. At an average of twenty bushels to the acre, this field would yield three million five hundred and eighty-four thousand bushels of wheat.

A PENNSYLVANIAN who was doing a thriving business in the echo line, has been ruined by the boys employed to secrete themselves behind various rocks, and repeat the cries of visitors. They struck for higher wages, and the echo man not responding cheerfully, they exposed the trick and killed the business.

ILLINOIS boasts of a young man twenty years of age who has never tasted tobacco, smoked a cigar, told a lie, uttered a profane or unbecoming word, or drank a drop of whisky, ale, beer, wine or any other liquor in his life, which is said to be a great thing in a young man brought up in that State.

TYING a line, at one end of which is a fish-hook, to a large rocket, fastening the hook in a man's hat, and then getting him to fire off the rocket, is the latest practical joke in suburban towns. It works to the utter amazement of the victim, and the great amusement of the spectators.

A WOMAN fell into the cellar of an unoccupied house in Cincinnati, last week, and remained there four days and nights without food or water, and in full hearing of constantly passing feet, before she was discovered and released.

A DRAYMAN in Wheeling Va., hung himself the other day, because his dinner was not ready when he came home for it, and left his wife and three children to take care of themselves.

EVERY person arrested, convicted and sent to the Penitentiary in the United States costs on an average $1,200; while every boy educated by the State costs on an average $400.

THIRTY-EIGHT bears have been killed in the vicinity of Wesley, Me., within the last twelve months. That is not a good town for children's picnics in the woods.

A CITIZEN of Swansea, aged sixty years, got a splinter in his hand, which brought on lock-jaw, of which he died in the course of a few days.

A CHEMIST announces that an average man weighing one hundred and fifty pounds, contains about one hundred and sixteen pounds of water.

A CITIZEN of Rehoboth, Mass., aged sixty years, hung himself in his barn the other day, because he was tired out and wanted to rest.

THEY boast of having grasshoppers five inches in length in Wisconsin.

THE TRUE LIVERS.

BY WILLIAM ROSS WALLACE.

We bless all things
From Nature's springs,
And each live a true liver,
While from the heart
Forever start
Thanks to the Father Giver
But as we try,
By touch and eye,
To wing the hours with pleasure,
Guard that the bliss
Takes no abyss
Of pain by undue measure.

How surely all
Sink in its thrall
Who worship brute sense only,
Till angel eyes
Mark each one lies
Than even worm more pronely!
The very world
With sunshine curled,
And meant for man's rich nursing,
Turned day and night
To very blight,
And soul and body cursing!

Oh, how divine
To *use* a shrine
As He who made intended!
Within the soul
What long joys roll
Their rivers broad and splendid!
Matter and mind
Are so entwined
That both are ever glowing;
As for more bliss,
We know, feel this,
That strength is always growing.

Then bless all things
From Nature's springs:
Used right, we 're not their vassals,
But true Kings tower
And fill with power
Humanity's grand castles.
So will we live,
Full armed to give
Strength, love on Life's great river,
While from each heart
Forever start
Thanks to the Father Giver.

A BONE of CONTENTION;

—OR—

The Waldemar Succession.

By MRS. HARRIET LEWIS,

AUTHOR OF "THE HAMPTON MYSTERY," "THE BAILIFF'S SCHEME," "THE LADY OF KILDARE," "THE OLD LIFE'S SHADOWS," "A DARING GAME," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XVII.

A CONSULTATION.

A moment of the deepest silence succeeded Honor's act of placing her marriage certificate in the hands of Sir Hugh Tregaron. The young Baronet stood up, and the folded paper trembled in his hands. Perhaps some faint suspicion of its contents had come to him, for there was a stern glitter in his gray eyes that was like the flashing of a sword in the sunlight. Then, without a word, he unfolded the rustling paper, and read, still in that dead, strange silence, the certificate of the marriage between Honor Glint and Darrel Moer.

He read it as if it had been a certificate of burial, or a death warrant.

His face was white as death when he had finished it. The paper fluttered from his hands to the floor. For once in his life, with all his nerves of steel, he could not conceal the appalling emotion by which his soul was tortured.

Honor stood before him, as awaiting sentence, drooping, and frightened at the visible tokens of his anguish. She trembled as with an ague. Her face was downcast, and Sir Hugh's eyes rested only upon her crown of pale gold hair.

She expected reproaches and angry words, but still he did not speak. The silence became still more appalling. It was broken at last by the girl's low, pitiful sobbing.

Sir Hugh moved a step nearer to her, as if to take her to his heart. Then he stopped short, and his arms fell to his side.

"Honor," he said, in a broken voice, which yet thrilled with a tenderness and love that even death could not have destroyed, and whose strength he had not himself fully known until now, "this man has then a right to visit you whenever he will? You are his wife!"

Honor recoiled as if she had received a blow. She looked up, her eyes burning like black stars from out the dead pallor of her face, and cried shudderingly:

"Oh, no, Sir Hugh, I am not his wife. I left him at the very altar, and had not seen him since, until he came into this room this evening. I do not call myself by his name. I fear him—I hate him—"

"And yet you are his wife!" said Sir Hugh, still in that broken voice. "You married him the day before yesterday."

"Yes, O yes! I suppose the marriage is valid, but I wish I had died before entering upon all this trouble, Sir Hugh."

"Did you not love him when you married him, Honor?"

A scarlet tide flowed into the pure, proud face of the girl and ebbed again, as she faltered:

"No, I did not love him. I was grateful to him, Sir Hugh. I liked him, and he might perhaps have won my love in time. I told him I did not love him, but he was very kind, and I—I thought I loved no one else. Oh, I was all wrong—all wrong!" and she wrung her hands piteously. "But I was so lonely and desolate, and he offered me a home, and love and care. I have been cherished all my life long, and I am so young, Sir Hugh, and I know so little of the world. Can you wonder that I shrank from going out into the world alone and desolate, and that I turned to the first kindly hand that was held out to me? I was not weak—not cowardly. I think the shock of my changed position must have dazed me. Oh, I must have been mad!"

"What was your position when Darrel Moer proposed to you?" asked Sir Hugh hoarsely. "Had—had Mrs. Glint dared to be unkind to you?"

"She had ordered me to leave the Red House within three days," answered Honor, with an uncontrollable bitterness. "She told me that I was a pauper, whom papa—dear, dear papa!—had educated, and she said it was time I earned my own living. I was in her daughter's way at the Red House, perhaps. Mrs. Glint never liked me from the first hour of her home coming. She was jealous of papa's affection for me. But she never showed herself my enemy until that fatal night—the night that Darrel Moer asked me to marry him. She wounded me, insulted me, stabbed me to the very soul. She taunted me with my dependence. She ended by telling me that I must leave her house within three days, as I have said. My brain seemed on fire. I went out to walk in the fields, and there it was that Darrel Moer found me and asked me to marry him."

"My poor little girl!"

"I would not say Yes then, although he promised me that, as his wife, I should have unlimited ability to befriend the poor, and to found schools for ragged children and hospitals for the sick. I thought I might find rest and peace in such a life, and I was tempted to marry him. Yet I asked for the night in which to consider my decision. I went home. Mrs. Glint called me into the drawing-room. Clarette had had a letter from Cornwall, and her mother told me that—that—" the brave voice faltered now, but the girl forced herself to keep steadily on, determined to tell the whole truth—"she told me that you were about to be married to a lady of high rank in Cornwall, and that preparations were making for your marriage. Don't interrupt me, Sir Hugh. I know now that the story is false, but I must not speak of it. I went up to my room, and I looked at the question of my marriage from every side. If I procured a situation as governess, papa would find me and take me back, and there would be trouble at the Red House and gossip in the town. I had a dozen considerations pressing upon me—I cannot remember them all now—but in the end I decided to marry Mr. Moer."

Sir Hugh repressed a groan.

"If I had only known—" he murmured.

"The next morning at eleven o'clock," resumed Honor, "I met Mr. Moer at the corner of Ivy Lane to give him my answer. He was there with a cab and a marriage license. We drove to the chapel, and were married."

"How came you to leave him at the altar?"

Honor replied by telling him of the appearance of Mr. Carrington in the vestry, of his withdrawal with Moer into the inner room, and of the subsequent conversation which she had unavoidably overheard, and in which Darrel Moer had fully revealed all the weakness, fickleness and unscrupulousness of his nature.

Sir Hugh hearkened in amazement.

"I fled from Darrel Moer as from a ravening beast of prey," added Honor. "I feel that I am not safe with him. I have no longer respect for him. I loathe him as I would a serpent. His wife! No, no! I will never acknowledge the bond that binds me to him, save in self-defence. I have told you my story, Sir Hugh, that you may know that it is all over between you and me. I can imagine no fate that would have been more blissful than that which would have been mine as your wife. But having said this much I can say no more. This unacknowledged tie binding me to Darrel Moer is none the less a barrier between you and me. I am set apart from all the joys of affection henceforth and forever. I can hear no more your loving words, Sir Hugh, precious as they were to me. It was my duty to tell you the truth. And now, Sir Hugh, now that all is over between us, I want to tell you that I shall always pray for your happiness, and that I hope you will marry some noble girl who will be all to you that I could have been."

She evidently expected him to leave her now, but he did not go. While she had been talking to him with a feverish rapidity, her eyes glittering, Sir Hugh had exerted himself to recover his lost courage and self-possession. There was a yearning tenderness in his voice, as he now said:

"You cannot accept this man as your husband, Honor. And indeed I think that he repents his marriage with you, and will not permit you to claim his name. Why did he not declare to me this evening the relationship existing between you and him? Because he preferred to keep it secret. I am sure he does not dream of your brave frankness toward me. You need a friend, Honor, more than you ever needed one in all your life. Darrel Moer is capable of any wickedness, should he find you an obstacle in his path."

"I believe it—I know it."

"Words of love cannot be spoken between us again until you are free," continued Sir Hugh gravely. "In the present situation of affairs, they would be an idle mockery. More, they would be an insult to you. But I will say to you now, Honor, that I shall never take any other woman into my arms as my wife. I will serve for you as Jacob served for Rachel, if need be, and longer; I will be your friend—your brother—until the happy day when I can become your husband. In every sorrow, Honor, remember that my heart beats for you alone, and that you are dearer to me than my life. And I shall bear about with me always the precious thought that you love me. But all may not be lost, Honor. There may be a way of escape for you from this wretched tangle."

"What possible way of escape can there be?"

"You were married by license?"

Honor replied in the affirmative.

"Moer must have declared you to be of age, while you are only seventeen. A false declaration of age has often sufficed to break a marriage. Your father could have the marriage set aside. Captain Glint, who stands to you in the place of a father, may be able to procure the annulment of this marriage. I will consult a lawyer upon the subject. When will the Captain return?"

"In about two months, Sir Hugh."

"Two months seem an eternity at this crisis. I fear nothing can be done to break the marriage until he comes. He is your guardian, and must act for you. The more I think of the matter, Honor, the more I am persuaded that this marriage can be annulled, and that without scandal."

Honor's face flushed with reviving hope.

"Oh, if it only might be!" she whispered.

"Meanwhile," said Sir Hugh, with forced cheerfulness, "where are you to remain during the Captain's continued absence? You cannot go back to the Red House. I do not like you to remain in a lodging house, exposed to meeting chance comers and goers. Your landlady is not a sufficiently able protector for you, should you require protection. I think, Honor, that I would better write to my aunt, who is now in London, and state the case to her. She will offer you a home in her house, and that will be the safest refuge that can be found for you during Captain Glint's absence. Will you consent to this?"

Honor assented gratefully.

"I will write to my aunt by the earliest post," said the young Baronet. "You will receive a letter from her by return mail. I shall write also to Captain Glint immediately, and I shall run down to Liverpool to-morrow and see a lawyer there in whom I have confidence. It will thus happen that you will not see me again until the day after to-morrow. I beg you to be hopeful and brave, Honor, and to be continually on your guard against some possible machinations of Darrel Moer. He is a man to strike in the dark."

"I will be very guarded," said Honor. "Oh, Sir Hugh, I feared that my hasty, mad marriage was to blight my whole life. Will it be so easily set aside that I need no longer lie awake at night in terror of my future?"

"Marriage is a holy institution, Honor," said Sir Hugh, with a grave tenderness, "and it should be entered upon with a full realization of all its solemn meaning. But you were in a manner forced into a marriage with this man, who cast you off, as one might say, at the altar. That ill-advised act which binds you to a villain—you a girl of tender years, he a man in the prime of life and old in wickedness—is an exception to the rule of marriages; but even this strange marriage could not be annulled, nor could you procure a divorce, save for the single flaw in the contract: the flaw being that you are under age, and acted without the consent or knowledge of your guardian. I shall be able to talk to you on this subject more at length after I shall have seen the Liverpool lawyer. The hour is growing late, Honor," he added, as the little clock on the mantel-piece struck ten. "I must go. You cannot be too circumspect now, you know. The world is full of censorious people."

He took her hand in his and pressed it to his lips with a gentle chivalry and a passionate tenderness that would well have become a knight "without fear and without reproach." Even while his manner declared his great and enduring love for her, he bestowed upon her no caresses, and called her by no loving names. It was plain that he would respect her slightest scruples, and would treat her with reverential courtesy, such as a brother might yield her, until the barrier now between them should be swept away, and he should be free before God and man to woo and win her.

He took his leave without lingering, and left the house. Honor put away her marriage certificate in her desk, and sat down before the fire, the light of hope irradiating the gloom that had threatened to engulf her.

The girl Lucky laid aside her book, and went into the adjoining bedroom to lay out the night garments of her young mistress.

While Honor thus sat alone, her feet on the fender, a brooding happiness in her lovely eyes, her parlor door opened and her landlady came into the room.

Miss Brown was an angular, elderly woman, with rigid ideas of propriety, to which she deemed it the duty of other people to conform. She was in an exceedingly unpleasant mood at this moment, and the vinegary expression of her countenance sufficiently indicated the fact.

"If I am not intruding, Miss Glint," she demanded, in a peremptory, "stand-and-deliver" style, and in an insolent tone, "may I have a few minutes' conversation with you?"

"Certainly, Madam," replied Honor, rising and placing a chair for her visitor. "You are welcome in my rooms at all times."

"Even when you are holding drawing-rooms, as I might call them, for all the young men in Southport?" sniffed Miss Brown. "If you will pardon my inquisitiveness, I should like to know if you have left Bolton for good? I received you here without references, having known you for years as a very promising pupil in the school with which I was connected. I supposed that, as you were looking ill, you came up to Southport for sea air. I chanced to hear a few words that passed between you and your first caller this evening, and from them I gathered that you are not Captain Glint's own daughter, as I have been led to believe, but that you are an object of his charity. Is this so?"

"It is true that I am not Captain Glint's own daughter, Madam, but I am his adopted daughter."

"Humph! There's a long difference between the two," said Miss Brown severely. "I might almost term your conduct as sailing under false pretences, Miss—ah, I suppose I must say Miss Glint. Have you quarrelled with Mrs. Glint? Are you going back to her?"

"No, Madam, I am not going back to Mrs. Glint. The Red House is no longer my home."

"Mrs. Glint has turned you adrift, eh?" said Miss Brown coarsely. "No doubt she had reasons for such a proceeding. It does not speak well for a young lady to be turned out of the home that has always sheltered her. I own I am shocked by your goings-on in my house this evening. It behooves me, as a single lady, without a male protector, to look carefully after my lodgers. You seem to be homeless, and to have no lady friend to look after you, but I have had to dance attendance upon the door knocker the entire evening, to admit your throng of gentlemen visitors. I always liked you at school, Miss—ah, Glint, although you were not in my classes, and I knew comparatively little of you. But, of course, you can't expect me to ruin myself for a person not akin to me. In short, Miss—ah, Glint," concluded the landlady primly, "you'll have to carry yourself and your visitors elsewhere. I desire your rooms to be vacated at the end of the week."

Honor's face reddened, and she replied haughtily:

"I will give up my rooms even sooner, Madam. I expect to receive a letter from London the day after to-morrow, and I shall go up to London the next day. You will perhaps accept my assurance that your estimate of me is entirely wrong. Circumstances have conspired to deprive me of a home, but I am blameless—"

"Of course—oh, of course!" sniffed the landlady. "You are the very pink of propriety. Let me tell you that I am not to be hoodwinked by you. You will leave my house on the day you named, or I will have you ejected according to law. Remember there's to be no delay. If your London letter don't come, out you go all the same. You appointed the day yourself, you remember. And another thing, Miss—ah, Glint: Your gentlemen visitors cannot come under my roof again. I can control my own house door, I believe."

With this exhibition of her temper and vulgarity, the virago took her departure, banging the door behind her.

"It seems as if all the world had turned against us, Miss Honor," said Lucky, who had been drawn from the inner room by Miss Brown's loud-voiced harangue. "Where are we to go next?"

"To London, I think," replied Honor. "If my letter comes in time, I mean. If it should be delayed, I don't know what is to become of us."

CHAPTER XVIII.

CAUGHT IN THE ACT.

It was in a very ugly frame of mind, as may be supposed, that Darrel Moer walked away from Oak Cottage, and hurried down the Manchester Road, turning the nearest corner, and proceeded toward the railway station. His visit to Southport had been a miserable failure. He had found Honor more beautiful than ever, as it seemed to him, but as cold and inaccessible as an iceberg. He knew that she was done with him, that she would never live with him as his wife, and that very knowledge kindled anew his old infatuation for her. Sir Hugh Tregaron had well said that Darrel Moer wanted what he could not have, but that when it became accessible he no longer cared for it. Thus Honor, by her coldness and hauteur, had inspired him with the resolution to possess her.

He actually loved her as much as it was in his fickle nature to love any one. He adored beauty, and she was rarely, gloriously beautiful. But even while he loved her, so curiously was his mind constructed or warped, he hated her for her contempt of him, and because she stood in the way of his interests. He was resolved to destroy every vestige of evidence of his marriage with her, and he was equally resolved to marry Hilda Floyd.

He thought of the heiress of the Manor now, but he did not think of her with affection. He believed that he had made a favorable impression upon her, and he was anxious to follow it up. She was a stepping-stone to the grandeurs which he had thought to possess in his own right, and as such he would make use of her. His reputation in society was worse than indifferent. As Lord Waldemar, and the owner of all the property that would go with the title, his vices would have been gilded, and he would have been able to make a grand match. As plain Darrel Moer, with an income of some two hundred pounds a year, he knew that he would stand no chance whatever to contract a wealthy marriage.

Under all the considerations pressing upon him, it was necessary for him to return to Yorkshire immediately. He arrived at the railway station in time to catch the last train, and took his place in a first-class compartment and wrapped himself in his travelling rug, and was soon steaming down the line through the gloomy night.

A spasm of jealousy convulsed him when he remembered that he had left Honor in company with Sir Hugh Tregaron.

"She'll be careful not to let him know of her marriage with me," he thought, judging her by himself. "She means to catch the Baronet, and marry him out of hand. We'll see how her little game prospers. If I don't marry Miss Floyd, I'll claim Honor openly. If I do marry Miss Floyd, I shall probably make some disposition of Honor which will be contrary to her present ideas and calculations."

With thoughts like these he pursued his journey to Yorkshire by way of Bolton.

He arrived at Floyd Manor soon after daybreak, and presented himself at the breakfast table, faultlessly attired, at eight o'clock, with not the faintest shadow of anxiety upon his features.

In truth, he was well satisfied with himself, for while he sipped his coffee and talked soft nonsense to the well-pleased heiress, his valet Bing, who was his equal in villainy, was already on his way to Lancashire, with ample instructions in regard to the errand with whose execution his master had charged him.

The man Bing had a melancholy air, and looked like a broken-down curate. He always dressed in black, was fond of wearing a white cravat and a tall shining hat. He had been associated with his master so intimately as to catch certain of Moer's "airs and graces," and was the beau-ideal in appearance of a gentleman's gentleman. He had materially altered his appearance by covering the lower half of his face with a gray false beard, and wearing spectacles.

On arriving at Southport, Bing sauntered forth from the station, valise in hand, and by dint of inquiry found his way to the Manchester Road.

There were plenty of cottages and rooms to let upon either side of the street, but Bing, while scrutinizing each and all of the white placards as one looking for lodgings, kept on until he came to Oak Cottage. The legend on the gate, the old tree root in the yard, the absurd little rockery under the windows, all answered to Moer's description of Honor's present refuge. Bing opened the gate and approached the cottage, twirling a heavy walking-stick with quite the air of a dandy, as he walked.

He knocked loudly at the house door, and Miss Brown appeared, opening the door with startling abruptness.

Bing raised his hat to her with exaggerated politeness.

"Excuse me, Madam," he said, "but I see that you have lodgings to let. The situation of your house is so extremely admirable that I am persuaded I should feel at home here if the terms are—ah—agreeable. What rooms have you to let?"

"The upper floor, sir," replied Miss Brown briskly. "Permit me to show you the rooms, sir. Have you much of a family?" and she eyed him speculatively.

"No, Madam. When you see me you see all there is of my family," said Bing, with a melancholy smile. "I stand alone like some—ah, like some solitary monarch of the forest!"

"Oh, indeed!" simpered Miss Brown. "Come up stairs, sir;" and she led the way to the upper rooms.

Bing followed, hat in hand. Miss Brown displayed to him the two chambers directly above the rooms at that moment tenanted by Honor Glint and her maid. Bing inquired the price, including board, and engaged them directly, paying a week's rent in advance.

"The rooms under these will be vacant tomorrow," observed Miss Brown. "If you should prefer them, you can exchange when the lodger goes away."

"I suppose I can remain now that I am here," remarked Bing, tossing his valise upon a couch. "I am an invalid, Madam, and rarely leave the house. You can send me up my meals at the hours most agreeable to yourself. I never like to make a lady trouble," he added gallantly.

Miss Brown's hard visage softened, and she bestowed a glance that was more than half tender upon her lodger, whom she shrewdly suspected to be an over-worked curate on a week's outing.

"There are few like you, sir," she replied. "Most people care but little about the trials of their landlady. One would think the mistress of the house was not of the same flesh and blood as themselves. But you, sir, have a heart to feel. If you will drop into my little parlor at any time, I shall be happy to see you, and to offer you a cup of tea."

"Thanks," said Bing, caressing his false beard. "Your parlor is just under this room, I understand. I shall be most happy to drink tea with you."

"My parlor is not under this room. It is on the other side of the hall-way," said Miss Brown hastily. "The room under this is a private sitting-room, and belongs to the lady lodger."

"Ah, yes," said Bing. "I remember now. Very well, Madam, I'll have dinner in my own room, and I'll take tea with you—a most charming arrangement. I do dote upon ladies' society."

Miss Brown tried to coax a blush to her withered, sallow cheek, and retreated in coy and girlish haste, believing that she had made a conquest of her lodger, and not quite certain whether or no she should accept him and sink the lodging-house keeper in the curate's wife.

She came back again a moment later, and said, with a little cackling laugh:

"You forgot to tell me your name, sir. I believe that is necessary, is it not?"

"Oh, it's Watson," said Bing coolly, telling the truth in part, for he rejoiced in the cognomen of Watson Bing. "And yours, madam?"

"Is Miss Brown—Augusta Feodora Brown," declared the spinster, with apparent pride. "If you should want anything, Mr. Watson, please mention it now. My maid is absent on an errand, and will not be in for an hour or more."

"I shall require nothing, my dear Madam," said Bing. "I find myself quite fatigued with my journey from Manchester—I'm a Manchester curate, ma'am, in ill health, and I've a letter in my pocket from my rector which I beg you to read. I believe I will lie down and sleep for an hour or two."

He exhibited to Miss Brown a letter purporting to be written by a Manchester clergyman, certifying that "the bearer, James Watson," was a curate, etc., of high moral character, etc., all of which had a most flattering impression upon the landlady. She made up her mind to win him if she could, and gave back the letter and retired from the room, determined to deepen by all the arts known to her the favorable impression she was positive she had already made upon the lodger.

Bing seated himself by his window, behind the blind, and kept a close and furtive watch upon the garden gate. Some five minutes later, he beheld Miss Brown going out with a basket on her arm.

"Just as I expected," he said to himself. "The old ninny has gone to market. She means to get me up a nice dinner. I wonder if she makes eyes at all her gentlemen lodgers. Her servant is gone out. There's no one but Miss Glint and her maid in the house, but I am sure they are here. I'll have to go down and play the brigand. 'The certificate, or your life'—that's it. They are only two girls, but then they might arouse the neighborhood with their screams. The thing is risky. I'm afraid, after all, I shall have to wait until night, when they will both be asleep."

Yet still he kept a furtive watch behind his window blind. He had his reward, for presently the house door was shut and a slender figure in black went down the walk. It was Honor Glint, deeply vailed, and on her way to post with her own hands a long letter which she had written to Capt. Glint.

Bing chuckled as she went out of the gate.

"She's off for the promenade and the pier head, and is disposed of for an hour or two," he said to himself. "Only the maid remains in the house. This is my chance."

He waited a little while, considering his plans, and then opened his door and stood upon the stair landing. All was still below. He crept down the stairs and peeped into Miss Brown's rooms. They were silent and deserted. Then he softly opened the door of Honor's room and looked in. It was also untenanted.

Bing went boldly into the room, locking the door behind him. Then he stealthily peered into the adjoining apartment, but Lucky was not there. A closer investigation assured him that she was in the kitchen, busy with some culinary preparation.

"The coast is clear," said Bing exultantly. "Now's my time."

He set to work with a skill and rapidity which a professional burglar might have envied.

He made a survey of the room and its contents. The little portable desk had been locked up in a trunk, which was in the bedroom, and the desired document was safely hidden in this desk. But the jewel case and dressing case were in plain sight, and Bing devoted his attention first of all to them, beginning with the dressing case.

A brief scrutiny convinced him that the paper was not there. He then examined the jewel box. There were some simple articles of jewelry in it, but no secret compartment in which a paper might be hidden. There was, however, an odd trinket which caught Bing's attention. He took it up and turned it over and over in his hands. It was simply a sphere of black onyx, an inch or more in diameter, superbly polished, and held in a tiny band of gold which was set with diamond sparks. A loop of gold attached to the tiny band showed that it served as a locket. The ball appeared solid, although of no great weight.

"A queer kind of ornament," muttered Bing. "Those sparks are paste, of course."

He had no time to waste upon anything apparently so unimportant, and dropped it into the box.

Had he purloined it and taken it to his master—had the secret hidden in its interior, and of which even Honor did not suspect the existence, been brought to light—the whole course of Honor's life might have been changed—aye, and the whole course also of the life of Darrel Moer.

Passing the trinket as of no importance, Bing continued his hasty search. He soon quitted the parlor for the bedroom.

Lucky had been engaged in packing nearly all the morning, and two or three trunks stood open. Bing passed them by, and concentred his attention upon a trunk which was not only locked, but carefully strapped. He undid the fastenings deftly. He was provided with false keys, and soon fitted one to the lock. Then he opened the trunk.

He found in the tray Honor's little writing case. He opened it with a key of his own, listening intently to every sound that came up from the kitchen. He had not locked the rear door, the key being absent from the lock, and an impulse now came over him to push the bed against it. But he was encumbered with the little desk, and he smiled at his own over-caution, as he heard a sound as of something falling in the kitchen.

"The girl's busy, and a minute more will settle this thing," he muttered. "If the paper's not in here, Miss Glint carries it on her person."

He emptied out the contents of the desk, but the paper of which he was in search did not appear. He turned the case upside down, running his fingers over every protuberance which suggested a secret spring. His shrewdness was rewarded by the discovery of a secret drawer in the very bottom of the box, a sort of false bottom, with only room enough to lay a paper of a certain thickness in it. And in this hidden receptacle was concealed the marriage certificate so all-important to Darrel Moer.

Bing seized the document—opened it—glanced over its contents.

"It's all right," he muttered exultantly. "That's the paper. I'm a rich man. Now to dig out."

But before he could disencumber himself of the desk—before he could conceal the paper on his person—in short, before he could even move—there was a soft rush behind him, and the paper was torn from his grasp, and was thrust hurriedly into the pocket of Honor's maid, and in the same instant—so quick was the girl's movement—the hands of Lucky Banner were plunged into his beard, tearing it from his face. Her assault was so sudden and violent that Bing, who was on his knees, toppled over, while Lucky retreated, the coarse beard in her hands, shrieking:

"Oh, dear! Help, help! Murder! It's Mr. Moer's man. Police! Help!"

Her screams filled the air, penetrating to the street.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

A KEEN REMINDER.

I wish you could have known Squire Jonas Lufton,—it would help you to appreciate our story. But I'll tell you as near as I can. He was a fat, flabby, heavy-featured man of seventy-five; rich enough to own thousands of dollars hidden away in Savings Banks in other States; and mean enough to swear to false returns to the Assessors, and to pick up his kindlings in the gutters of the highways. And yet the old rat could be jolly and good-natured; and though now, in his old-age, he was one of the main sleepers of the church, he could tell, with a gusto, of the mad pranks which he had cut in his youth. He still practiced in the courts, and held great honor in being the oldest living member of the Dunlap County Bar. I say, he still practiced in the courts,—but his business was confined to looking after the real estate and probate interests of ancient clients.

Billy Walton kept the largest of our village stores. He was a young man, just entering upon the active business of life, and from his father, who had kept store before him, he had inherited good business capacity, and had also learned many of the tricks of trade. And among other things, he had learned exactly how to estimate the value of Squire Lufton's custom. As Lufton had done in the time of the elder Walton, so he continued to do unto the latter. He would enter the store, and salute the proprietor and his customers as a self-satisfied father might greet his children. Then he would get off an old joke, and expend one of his greasy, guttural laughs. Then he would go to the raisin box, and get a handful of raisins,—then a cracker was taken from the barrel,—then a slice of cheese was appropriated. And this proceeding the old rascal carried on day after day, as he had done it for a long, long time; and to give the matter the color of a joke, he would often, when aware that the keeper was watching him, laughingly remark that the things he had taken might be charged to the town. "*Charge this to the Town, Billy,*" he said, as he munched away at an apple which he had appropriated. At first Billy used to look glum at the oft-repeated order, but at length a change came over the spirit of his manifestations, and it was observed that when the old Squire issued his jocular mandate of "*Charge this to the Town,*" Billy would go into his little counting-room, and make an entry in his Day-Book.

At length the day of the Presidential Election arrived, and among the first at the polls was Squire Lufton. He was an ardent party man, of the old Hartford Convention stamp, and believed in doing his whole duty to his country. As he was about to deposit his vote he was interrupted by a peremptory voice—

"I challenge Squire Lufton's vote!"

He looked up, and beheld Billy Walton standing by the side of the Selectman who had charge of the ballot-box.

"Challenge my vote?" he gasped, completely dazed by the suddenness and the audacity of the thing.

"Yes, sir!" said Billy. "I challenge your vote!"

"Wh-wh-what d'ye mean?"

"I challenge the right of a *Pauper* to vote."

Lufton thought he saw a joke, and he tried to laugh; but Billy cut him short with,—

"Squire Lufton, you are a Town Pauper by your own act and choice. At sundry times during the past year I have furnished you with the means of sustenance, and at your own request have *charged the items to the Town.* I think that is sufficient to constitute a pauper."

There was hardly a man in the hall who did not at once appreciate the thing; and the uproarious laughing and stamping and clapping told how keenly it was relished. And, to cap the climax, the old skinflint did really lose his vote. Having enjoyed his joke, and given his reminder, Billy would gladly have withdrawn his ridiculous charge; but Lufton could not stand the press. In the midst of the wild outburst of merriment he slunk away, and the minority on that day was reduced just one vote lower than it might otherwise have been. But the lesson to Jonas Lufton was a healthy one; and be sure the result was a very saving one to the traders of the village.

S. C., JR.

"A GIFT OF GAB."—Whoever is a master of language, and hath a mind full of ideas, will be apt, in speaking, to hesitate upon the choice of both; whereas common speakers have only one set of ideas, and one set of words to clothe them in, and these are always ready at the mouth; so people come faster out of church when it is almost empty, than when a crowd is at the door.

THE NEW YORK LEDGER

ROBERT BONNER, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, AUGUST 17, 1872.

WE always stop the LEDGER at the expiration of the year, or of the time for which it is paid, so that if you wish to continue it, it would be well to renew your subscriptions at least one week before the time expires.

WE CANNOT change the address of a subscriber, unless he gives us his *former* as well as his present address.

REJECTED MANUSCRIPTS.—We will not return rejected manuscripts.

Brutality Understood.

A railroad "accident" was announced a few days ago by a telegraphic dispatch in something like the following words:

"*Collision between two trains. A number of passengers killed—others bruised.*"

This brief and comprehensive style of disposing of the matter partakes of the character of a market report, and indicates as much indifference as if it were merely the announcement of the arrival of so many sheep, or the sale of so many cattle.

And indeed, why should there be any greater manifestation of feeling in merely telling a thing, when the causing of it seems to trouble nobody? For we do not hear that those who, in this instance, were morally guilty of murdering several passengers who had confided their persons to the care of this railroad company, have been conscience smitten by the occurrence, in the least. Their brutality seems to be understood, and accepted as a matter of course, and the report of the "accident" is simply in keeping with the cold-blooded conduct of the managers of the road, who caused all the terrible suffering attendant upon such an event.

This collision happened on a portion, or branch, of one of the main lines of travel leading from this city. It was the result of the grossest carelessness. One of the trains was out of time, and, of course, out of place, and was "taking the chances" of finding the track clear, when there was no reason for supposing that it would be clear. While rapidly rounding a curve, it came in collision with a train coming in the opposite direction, with which, in the now familiar term of description, as applied to such occurrences, we are informed that it "telescoped"—that means, as we understand it, that one car runs into and inside of another, as the smaller part of a telescope slides into the larger.

We do not care to waste time in demanding that the two conductors of these trains, or either of them, be arrested and punished. However just that might be, it would do comparatively little good. What seems to us of more importance is, that the wealthy owners and managers of the road, who run trains on a system which admits of the possibility of two meeting on a single track, should be made to pay the penalty of their reckless disregard for the safety of human lives.

A poor man who resents an insult, perhaps, and gets into a brawl in which he takes the life of a single individual, is immediately thrown into prison, and ultimately conducted to the gallows; but railway managers, who conduct their business on a system which naturally, and, in the course of time, inevitably leads to "accidents"—miscalled—such as we refer to, why, they may swell as lions at our watering places, or go off to Europe to luxuriate amid the pleasures of foreign lands! Nobody interferes with their freedom; hardly a whisper of censure is breathed against them!

We should like to see them at least branded with the appropriate title of "Railway Murderers."

◆

American Trotting Horses—"News from over the Sea."

A writer in a recent number of "Belgravia"—a leading London magazine—in speaking of "Uncle Sam's Diversions," blunders in this style:

> "The best trotting match I ever saw was that of Dexter, the great American crack, along with another celebrated mare called Lady Thorne, against time, for a purse of a thousand dollars, I believe. They trotted three mile heats, the mare running beside Dexter, who was ridden under saddle, to encourage him on."

Dexter was never "ridden under saddle" in any of his contests with Lady Thorn, and the mare never ran beside him to encourage him on. She, like Dexter, was always a fair and square trotter. But, not satisfied with blundering in this way, the writer in "Belgravia" adds—

> "Dexter has since been presented by his proprietor, Robert Bonner, of the *New York Ledger*, to General Grant, although he refused six thousand dollars for him on the ground after his celebrated match."

Dexter has not been presented to General GRANT. He is still owned by Mr. BONNER, and instead of "refusing six thousand dollars for him," Mr. B. has refused ten times that sum for him. He paid thirty-three thousand dollars for him. If our English cousins were in the habit of reading American papers, they would not need to be informed that "six thousand dollars" would not buy a good second-class trotting horse in this country.

◆

Not Living Half Their Days.

"Did you run against me on purpose?"

"If you choose to look upon the affair in that light, you may do so, sir."

"Very well; then take *that!*" and the speaker sent a pistol ball crashing through the other's skull.

That bloody drama in one act was performed in San Antonio, Texas. The actors were both desperadoes, who chanced to come in collision accidentally in the street. One of them thought the other ran against him on purpose, and hence the dialogue and the murder.

The survivor, according to the local account of the affair, coolly walked off, carrying his pistol in his hand, as though to be in readiness to exchange the compliments of the season with any comer whatever. But no one molested him; and reaching his horse, which was tied to a post, he unhitched the animal, mounted, and rode off into the country.

The body of the dead man was picked up, and buried by the authorities. No one cared for him or for his fate. He died as the fool dieth, and his murderer will probably come to a like fate. "Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days."

OUR CLAIMS UPON ENGLAND.

BY J. HALL, D. D., NEW YORK.

The business of the *Alabama*, let us thankfully believe, is as good as ended. Launched in deceit, the instrument of accursed greed, she has been the type and sign of discord for a decade. Let her be buried out of sight and mind, or only thought of as Greeks or Trojans should have thought of the ship that carried Helen and destruction to Troy.

The little, independent Geneva once gave thought and life of intellect to civilization in Europe. Let there go forth from beside its blue lake such tempered wisdom and approved moderation as shall sway national consciences in future, and leave more iron for ploughshares and pruning-hooks than heretofore! And now let us think of some of the demands we are to make on England in the peaceful future, and the pleas by which we are to back our claims.

We demand from her the respect due to an equal. We are, it is true, younger than Great Britain. But that is not our fault. We did not commission Columbus, nor could the *Mayflower* have been advantageously chartered earlier. Children are not to be blamed for being younger than their parents. But we are now grown into a nation, with all the elements of national life, with at least as much right to decent regard as Belgium. We claim to be dealt with as a nation—the child of Great Britain, to be sure—but a child no more. "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath."

And to sustain this claim, let us show maturity of character. Let us not babyishly fight with our nurses; or childishly scream about trifles; or weakly pout over apparent neglect; or boyishly parade our muscle, and proclaim how many we can "lick." Let us not scold one another, or anybody else, like little girls in an infant school: "Nelly Jones! you are the boldest, selfishest, baddest girl in school." Let us not be like the tricky urchin who makes the sharpest trades, and has always the biggest bag of marbles, and the best of the playthings. Let us keep above the stage of "wooden nutmegs;" and in self-control, temper, patience, moderation, prove our mature nation-hood, and deserve and command the respect of England and the world.

We claim from her sympathy and affection. New England is "kith and kin" of Old England. New England has her tongue with its provincialisms—has her rivers and cities reproduced, only bigger and better, many of them—her pluck, her thrift, her trading faculty, and her taste for governing everybody. America has indeed resisted England, "even unto blood," but it was because she was a "chip of the old block." Had her people been red or black men, they would have paid taxes, and died out. But the lessons she taught them they executed, and even bettered the instruction. Now America has won her spurs—subdued a very big piece of the globe, and is ruling over it with English ways adapted to new circumstances. Why should she not love us—with that love that has in it some admiration, and a little honest pride in its object?

And in order to make good this claim, let us cultivate that love that begets love. Even a parent may be passionate, or wrong; but a good child goes backward and throws a garment over the parent's shame, and gains thereby a blessing. Let us not harp on the string of England's faults. Let us not laugh at her institutions. They served our fathers well; and you could no more change some of them with advantage, than you could convert her oaks into sugar-maples. Let us not sneer at her aristocracy. Let us be content that we have none, but be willing to admit that many of them are among the noblest men and women on the earth. Let us not open our mouths and greedily swallow all the garbage which uncleanly correspondents gather up and spread on the pages of our papers, for our delectation. Why should a "scandal of the peerage" be a *bon-bon* to honest Americans? Can't we have healthier nutriment than *that*, in this broad America? And if we must consume the hateful morsel, alas! alas! have we not enough of the home-made article? Let us magnanimously take the tone to her, she would not be advised by one of her greatest sons to take to the Colonies of the long past.

"Be to her faults a little blind;
Be to her virtues ever kind;
Let all her ways be unconfined,
And put a padlock on her mind."

We claim her hearty coöperation in those great tasks for mankind that are worthy of civilized nations. What peoples there yet remain to be lifted into the comity of nations! How many chains, that are grinding into the bodies and souls of men, have to be snapped asunder! How many millions there are, even in the highest levels of our race, whose lives are poor, dark, starved and sickly! What crowds there are, even in England and in America, for whom, God help them! there are few chances to do well! How many jails remain to be turned into district schools, and devils'-palaces to be made into lyceums and churches! How many victories of peace have yet to be won! how many charnel-houses of the dead await the voice of the conquering Christ to call them forth, with, "Loose them, and let them go!" We want—we claim and demand—in the name of humanity, of freedom, of our common blood, of our long-united history—of our common holy Gospel—the coöperation of England in these magnificent enterprises of the future. What other nation can fraternize with us as she can? The chances of history, the exigencies of international rivalry have made others our friends, not that they disliked us less, but that they disliked England more. With her we are in natural affinity. Go to our bookstores, and look at our common literature; to our churches, and join in our common worship; to our cities, and look at our common arts and manufactures; to our society, and look at our common foibles, follies, aye, and crimes, and the conviction is irresistible, that we can positively and actively coöperate for the common benefit of mankind in the great workshop of the world as no other nations can. We claim this coöperation at her hands. This is a demand needing no court of arbitration. The conscience of both, free and unwarped by unworthy jealousies, admits its justice.

But to sustain it, let us be generous, just, conciliatory. If any one is to concede a little, it is the young that should yield, is it not? She does many things as we do not; we are more free than she. Well, toleration is the very vital breath of freedom. Let us tolerate her divergencies. Let us give her credit for her splendid contributions to the world's thought, for her wise caution, for her indomitable pluck. We revel in the material wealth of a new and rich continent, of which we have but scratched the surface. It was something, was it not, for our mother to make a living for her children on yonder diminutive isles, to give us so good a start in life, and withal to command the respect of the world? Let us not take up evil report against her, but remember that he who abuses her a hundred years back abuses us, and gentlemen—as we all are here—resent insults on their ancestors. Let us not call her "effete"—she is not effete—and so provoke her to call us raw. Let us stand up by her side, in the van of labor, of just legislation, of public honesty, of education, of human enfranchisement. We have much she can share with us; she has much we still need. Let us extend each to the other an honest, clean, strong hand. "Let us have peace." Let us settle it that he who, for personal or party purposes, would unclasp these hands, and put weapons in them, is wickedly and selfishly fiting out *his* "Alabama," and deserves, and will sooner or later receive, the execration of mankind.

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—We publish this week another beautiful poem by our distinguished contributor, WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

A CASE OF BIRD CONSCIENCE.

BY HENRY WARD BEECHER.

An unknown friend, but a constant reader of the *Ledger*, writes thus:

> "I have some English skylarks, sent me more than a year ago, by a friend in England. Unfortunately for them, they were not 'reared in a cage like your mocking-bird.' They sing some of the time as only skylarks can sing; they soar, alas! to bump their heads against the top of their cage. If I give them their liberty, they may fall a prey to a hawk, jay, or, what *would be worse, a boy*. Next winter, should they survive until then, they would die. I do not think they would migrate, as they do not in England. Which would be the *greater* cruelty, to keep them until death releases them, or let them soar and sing even for a short time, as their kind Creator designed to have them do? Skylarks should under no circumstances *be put into a cage*. Which would *you* do, Mr. Beecher? I think your wife would have a word to say, if she had the care of them. Here is a case of *conscience* for you to decide. Will you not relieve mine, by replying through the *Ledger*, or otherwise, and oblige
>
> "Your constant reader, S. L. B."

The English skylark is often seen in cage in England, and they appear to do well. How long they will thrive in confinement we have no means of knowing. It is the custom of those who are skillful in keeping them, to put a fresh turf of grass in their cage daily. We presume that they will adapt themselves to a life of confinement as readily as do bullfinches, robins, blackbirds, etc. The nervous and restless habits of the mocking-bird would seem to mark him as eminently unfit for a cage life; yet, when they *do* live, they thrive year after year with great tenacity.

We do not consider the danger to skylarks from turning them out in spring to be any greater than is risked by all nest-builders. It is the order of creation that one thing should eat another. We live by death, and birds must take their chance, like all other things that enter this queer acting world. The experiment has been tried of acclimating the English skylark. On Staten Island, many years ago, a large importation of them was set loose; and once or twice many were brought over and set loose east of Brooklyn. Of the condition of those on Staten Island we have no knowledge, though sometime ago we were told that they were multiplying, and bid fair to take their place among our song birds. But on Long Island, their fate, we fear, has been different. The larks increased greatly, proving entirely hardy in our climate. In a few years they would have spread far up the island, and have established themselves beyond danger of extinction. But, alas! our working German people had been accustomed, in their own country, to break the Sabbath and to shoot larks, which abound in the Fatherland. And going out with their shot guns, they commenced a slaughter which threatened to destroy the newly established colonies. Is it not a pity that emigrants should kill off emigrants?

We have never learned whether the larks were exterminated or not. Does any one reading the *Ledger* know? Should the English lark continue to increase on our shores, he will gradually spread toward the West, and no sooner is he fairly over the far Western mountains than he will find himself in the presence of American skylarks that are almost of identical species with the English. Our meadow-lark is a very different fellow. He is much larger; his flight is low and heavy; and though he sings on the wing, he never soars heavenward as he sings, as all true souls should, but has an eye upon the earth, the very soil, on which he builds his nest. The song too is utterly different.

There is no reason, that we can imagine, why many foreign singing birds might not be propagated in America. It is a thing which some gentleman of taste, wealth and leisure, of a scientific turn, might attempt wisely. One would not have lived in vain who should establish the Nightingale in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Virginia. We have thousands of English sparrows in and about New York. Why not bring out the *mavis*, the *robin redbreast*—utterly unlike our red-breasted robin—and several others, whose song is familiar to English ears, but strange to ours.

We have pretty much all the weeds that foreign lands can supply, their varieties of vermin, their diseases, their people; why not also secure their singing birds?

We vote that a premium be offered, say by Mr. BONNER, of a thousand dollars, to any one who shall successfully establish a colony of any good singing foreign bird! There is this good thing about it, that they will not be obliged to learn English, like other emigrants, but can go on singing in their own tongue in which they were born.

We are paying enormous prices for foreign singers, which is all right; but why not procure other foreign singers who will perform all summer, for rich and poor, without money and without price?

◆

A Great Newspaper Achievement.

We think we know something of newspaper enterprise. A paper that has, like the *Ledger*, published original contributions from the President of the United States, members of the Cabinet, and Senators in Congress, and from EDWARD EVERETT, GEORGE BANCROFT, CHARLES DICKENS, WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT, the Presidents of twelve of the leading colleges, and innumerable articles from the pens of the principal Bishops, Doctors of Divinity and Clergymen, to say nothing of novels by HENRY WARD BEECHER, Rev. Dr. TYNG, and numberless other distinguished writers, ought to know what newspaper enterprise is. And from our point of view and experience, we do not hesitate to say that the New York *Herald's* LIVINGSTONE expedition is the greatest achievement, in the way of newspaper enterprise, which the world has ever seen. The audacity of the conception, the liberality in the outlay, and the vigor, skill and courage with which the enterprise was carried to completion, were all worthy of a great metropolitan journal, and deserve the heartiest recognition from the entire newspaper world.

◆

The Prevalence of Crime.

How horribly the wickedness of the human heart sometimes develops itself in unexpected quarters. The prophet of old says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" It is the fashion of some people to scoff at this saying, and to claim that the human heart is not so very deceitful, nor so very wicked, after all. But one has only to read the newspapers every morning to see that the prophet is right, and that the scoffers are wrong. The depths of wickedness, the ingenuity in wrong-doing, the persistency in cruelty, the horrible heartlessness of parents toward children, the wide-spread, all-pervading elements of demoralization which riot through the land, show that the heart is not only deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, but that its deceitfulness and wickedness are fast being converted into the driving-wheels of society on every hand.

Still there are at least ten righteous men left in every city, and there is also a saving sprinkling of them through the rural districts; so, bad as things seem, we need not apprehend the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, even if we deserve it.

DENDROTAPHIA.

BY WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

Near our south-western border, when a child
Dies in the cabin of an Indian wife,
She wraps it tenderly in delicate furs,
Blankets and bark, and binds it to the branch
Of some majestic tree, with leathern thongs
And sinews of the deer. A mother once
Wrought at this pious task, and murmured thus:
"Child of my love! I do not lay thee down
Among the chilly clods, where never comes
The pleasant sunshine. There the greedy wolf
Might break into thy grave and tear thee thence,
And I should sorrow all my life. I make
Thy little bed where he who dwells among
The rustling leaves, the gentle summer wind,
Shall come to rock thee. Here the morning sun,
Which woke thee once from sleep to smile on me,
Shall shine upon thy rest, and sweetly here
Shall lie the red light of the evening clouds,
Which called thee once to slumber. Here the stars
Shall look upon thee—the bright stars of night,
Which thou didst wonder at. Here too the birds,
Whose music thou didst love, shall sing to thee,
And near thee build their nests and rear their young
With none to scare them. Here the forest flowers,
Whose opening in the spring-time thou didst greet
With shouts of joy, and which so well became
Thy pretty hands when thou didst gather them,
Shall spot the ground below thy resting-place.
"Yet haply there are fairer flowers than these,
Which, in the land of souls, thy spirit plucks,
In fields that wither not, among a crowd
Of joyous children like thyself, who went
Before thee to that brighter land, and sport
Eternally beneath its stormless skies.
"Sport with them, dear, dear child, till I shall come
To dwell with thee; and thou, beholding me
From far, shalt run and leap into my arms,
And I shall clasp thee as I clasped thee here
While living—oh most beautiful and sweet
Of children! now more passing beautiful,
If that can be, with eyes like summer stars—
A light that death can never quench again.
"And now, oh Wind, that here, among the leaves,
Dost whisper, breathe thou ever softly thus.
Oh, put not forth thy strength to rend away
The branches, and let fall their precious load
A prey to foxes. Thou too, ancient Sun,
Beneath whose eye the seasons come and go,
And generations rise and pass away,
While thou dost never change, oh! call not up,
With thy strong heats, the grim, dark thunder-cloud,
To smite this tree with bolts of fire, and tear
The trunk, and strew the ground with splintered boughs.
Ye Rains, fall softly on the couch that holds
My darling. There the panther's speckled skin
Shall turn aside the shower, and be it long,
Long after thou and I have met again,
Ere summer winds and winter rains shall waste
This couch, and all of thee that now is left
To me thy mother. Meantime, while I live,
With each returning sunrise I shall seem
To see thy waking smile, and I shall weep.
And when the sun is setting I shall think
How, as I watched thee, o'er thy sleepy eyes
Drooped the smooth lids and laid on the round cheek
Their lashes, and my tears will flow again.
And often, at those moments, shall I seem
To hear again the sweetly prattled name
Which thou didst call me by, and it will haunt
My home till I depart to be with thee."

◆

A YOUNG MAN IN SEARCH OF PLEASURE IN THE DOGDAYS.

He is bound for the Washtummit House, where life is a perpetual holiday, where gauzy beings float through the halls and corridors like strains of sweet music. His red, his pink and his blue cravats, and *ne plus ultra* coats and pantaloons, which are to bring *her* down, are safely packed in his trunk. His hair has the last velvet shave, which reminds one of a State-prison convict.

But the worm is at the root of the gourd. Alas! he is a bachelor. The worst room at the top of the house is assigned him, the dirtiest wash-bowl, the most slatternly chamber-maid, the most dilapidated bell-wire, the thinnest blanket and the dirtiest quilt. A bureau whose drawers either will not open at all, or when opening, seat him in the middle of the floor, with his treasures in his lap.

Good Heavens! was it for this that he, Adolphus Smith, the pet of his family, left his comfortable brown-front house? To be thus snubbed? There must be some mistake. After a hasty and muddy toilet, he descends to the office to announce that he is Adolphus Smith of Smithville. The perfumed clerk does not fall down in a fit, nor does he even seem to hear it. Thunder and blitzen! He must have some breakfast before he can go any further. He repairs to the dining-room, in search of comfort. He is assigned the worst seat at the furthest end of the hall, in the hottest corner. Beads of perspiration stand upon his face. Mopping his temples with his handkerchief, he beckons to a waiter. The waiter is attracted by a rich angel who sits a few tables off. He beckons to another, and makes known his desires. This waiter is in a distracted state, owing to the departure of a family of nine that morning, who had not "remembered" him when leaving. A light dawns upon his brain. He pulls out his pocket-book, and shows a five-dollar bill. The waiter then assigns him a comfortable seat, asks him how long he intends to stay, tells him to call upon Henry Jones and he shall want for nothing.

So far so good. The breakfast is satisfactory, and he now makes the tour of the halls and drawing-room. Beautiful creatures in pink, gray and blue are posed in every captivating attitude. But what is Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba? Lynx-eyed mammas and aunts are about; and those curls and sashes are not to be thrown away upon the man who owns no "dog-cart." They give him a wicked look out of the tail of their eye. He is handsome. It is a pity. But what *can* one do?

He amuses himself playing a while with the children who have the prettiest nurses. But that, after all, is small game for Adolphus Smith of Smithville. He strolls into the reading-room, and peruses columns of city sunstrokes.

This is not exhilarating. He hears that there is a bathing beach *near*. Let him drown his sorrows in the flowing sea. He walks one mile. He walks two miles. He walks three miles. His shoes are new and tight. He has forgotten his sun umbrella. His shirt collar is a limp rag upon his neck. His face has a lobster hue, and the bathing-houses are all taken up.

At this juncture he is pressed by a wretch upon the beach to eat some hot clam chowder. Declining, with an oath, he pays a farmer to trundle him back to the hotel, and land him at the most obscure entrance. He secludes himself in his room for hours, mops himself again in dirty water, calls for a Railroad Guide, chooses the shortest route for the sunstruck city, where a cool house and water, fresh towels, and enough to eat, await him.

And thus ends Adophus Smith's pleasure trip FANNY FERN.

◆

Setting Bees on Tax Collectors.

A reluctant tax-payer in Arkansas, named Rollston, being set upon by two collectors who came to distrain upon his household effects, politely invited them to go ahead in their own way, and then stepped out of doors. The collectors began to make an inventory of the furniture, but were interrupted by the return of the delinquent and a couple of hired men, each bearing a bee-hive. These were set upon a table and opened. Rollston and his men then rushed from the room by different doors, which they closed and fastened after them, leaving the imprisoned collectors to fight the bees, which swarmed out of the hives in great numbers and attacked them with fury. The collectors succeeded in breaking through a door, after some time, and escaped. They were badly stung, and Rollston thought it was a good joke until he was arrested, fined fifty dollars, and sentenced to thirty days' imprisonment; that sobered him.

CANNOT AFFORD TO MARRY.

We all know that luxury is on the increase with us. Year by year people's houses grow finer, inside and out. People are clad better, wear more expensive jewelry, and there is more riding on fine horses and driving in fine carriages than ever before.

It is delightful to live amid all this splendor, and no one can enjoy it more than I; but now and then I stop to think. Then the skeleton of all this sensual beauty stalks before me, and this is what I say to myself:

A price is being paid for this wearing of purple and fine linen, and for the palaces we live in, and for faring sumptuously every day, that as yet we hardly understand. It may be that these splendid houses are robbing us of homes; it may be that, to sweep the streets with velvet, many are bidding farewell to all that brings Heaven near to earth. If so, give us rather the poorest shelter that ever covered Christian head, and let us clothe ourselves in hodden gray.

Do not misunderstand me. A palace can be as happy a home as a cottage. The millionaire may live as he likes; but in this land, at least, what the rich man may do the poor man thinks he must, and there the evil creeps in. The housekeeper runs in debt for velvet sofas, and mirrors that reflect his own anxious countenance when he would rather not see it. His wife worries herself into a shadow over fripperies that only contrast drearily with her worn-out look, and his daughter puts it out of the power of any man to woo and win her who has not a little fortune at command, by dressing as though she were a duchess. As for the young men themselves, what with finery and drink and smoke, the largest salary that can be commanded in the city of New York is insufficient for their personal wants. They are just as bad as the girls, and worse.

The result is evident. Those above the mechanic class who yet have limited means, remain single, or marry from mercenary motives. Those who fall into Cupid's trap, and "engage" themselves, drag the weary years along, waiting for means to live in style, each too utterly selfish to think of the least self-sacrifice, each half regretting the momentary impulse that led to a pledge to be fulfilled, if fulfilled at all, after youth and beauty and the first sweet longing for each other's love have faded utterly.

"He won't do for me," says the girl of eighteen, as she thinks of the young lover with whom she has been flirting for a month or so. "He has only a thousand dollars a year. I couldn't dress on that."

"It won't do to propose," says the man to himself. "The old gentleman won't be able to leave her anything."

And so it goes. Women of twenty-five and men of forty odd marry oftener than those in their spring-time, now-a-days; and though there may be a good deal of kindliness and happiness in these autumn marriages, may I be forgiven for doubting that there is much romance or passion interwoven in the compact that gives one a housekeeper, and the other a banker. If she had married the boy she loved when she was seventeen, if he had won the woman he chose before he "could afford to marry," life would have been a different thing to both.

Perhaps it is better than nothing; who knows? But better to have fought the fight with poverty under Love's banner. It used to be the old folks who drove away Cupid once. The old gentleman of the play, who stamps about the stage because the young soldier, with no fortune but his sword, has offered to the old gentleman's daughter, and the old lady who *will* marry her daughter to a gouty old nobleman, are well known; but now-a-days the young folks themselves are the prudent ones. Old people stand amazed at their ideas of marriageable incomes. Kid gloves are more to them than kisses, and a diamond necklace a better thing to twine about the neck than the most loving arms. To wiggle down the street with a silken train sweeping the mud; to be as thoroughly on exhibition as any member of the *demi monde*, whenever she appears in public; to look so much like her that, at a distance, it is hard to tell the two apart—this is the ambition of the New York girl of to-day. The young men admire her. They also, attired a la fashion-plates, promenade and flirt, call on her, and dance with her at entertainments.

They don't mean to marry. The girls know it. They can't afford to marry. It costs too much to dress, to eat, to drink, to live generally. Get a man up to the position of clerk in a large retail dry goods store, and he becomes so intensely genteel, that if his home cannot be a whole brown stone house, he will have none at all.

The mechanic can marry his pretty milliner, for he can live "on a floor" and be happy; but on less than good mechanic's wages, your clerk must outdress his employer, and be as expensively dissipated as his employer's son and heir, if possible. After this, if the poor young man pays his board now and then, what more can be expected of him? Certainly he cannot marry. And in view of what he is fast becoming—a fashion-plate that smells of whiskey and cigar smoke—it would not be so bad a thing perhaps, though to my mind love and wedded happiness are life's purest blessings. It would not be so bad, if the result were merely lonely old bachelorhood and dreary spinsterhood—men lounging at clubs in their old-age, and women lecturing to other single women on the brutality of man regarded as a husband. But I fear this is not the worst.

Do girl's faces look as pure to you as they did ten years ago? Do you meet a brazen stare and a suspicious ogle oftener than a modest blush? And do you ever shudder a little and ask yourselves whether those men who "can't afford to marry" are as safe companions for young and attractive girls, as men who are looking for pure wives who will never disgrace them, might be? I candidly confess I do not think they are.

MARY KYLE DALLAS.

◆

A Big Farm.

It is declared that seed-time and harvest shall never more fail; and, taking the world at large, the promise holds literally true from year to year. In special localities, now in one part of the world and then in another part, there are drouths and failures of crops and threats of famine; but in other quarters of the globe the earth yields such bountiful harvests that the whole human family is amply supplied with the necessaries of life. Steam helps us out of local famines in a way of which the people of a past age could have no idea. Vast quantities of grain can now be moved hundreds of miles sooner than a wagon load could be transported before steam was harnessed to his iron car. And then the fact of a famine in one quarter of the globe can now be flashed in a moment to those sections which are rich in harvests. And so, by one means and another, the earth, as to its agricultural aspects, has practically become one great farm, worked for the general sustentation of the great family of man, and on that grand common homestead seed-time and harvest shall never fail.

◆

A Grandmother's Remonstrance.

Why will mothers cast pearls before swine? In other words, why hold up their babies to bachelors to be kissed? I never witness such desecration of the innocents without being moved to protest against it, in the Scriptural phrase above quoted. Fond mothers should know that bachelors, when they get out of sight, always exclaim, "Pah!" and hasten to wipe their mouths after the operation.

A GRANDMOTHER.

"PONDER WELL THE PATH OF THY FEET."

BY LOUISE S. UPHAM.

Ponder well the path of your feet, my boy,
The road you choose now is for life;
The journey is long, and clouds sometimes may fling
Dark shadows where only bright sunshine should cling;
And with dangers your pathway is rife.

Turn not to the right or the left, my boy;
You may gather the thorns with the flowers.
The way to success lies far, *far* ahead;
If you step *now* to dally, you may be misled;
Treasure well the fast-flying hours!

Let the goal which you strive for be Right, my boy,
Then with brave, Spartan courage, press on!
Temptation in many bright forms will assail,
But be strong in the *Right*, for right must prevail,
And your guerdon at last shall be won.

Let the prize you seek after be Truth, my boy,
And deserve not an ignoble fame:
Though the base and untrustful may flourish a day,
In Truth's clearer light they must soon slink away,
With guilt's deep stain on each name.

Heed a father's parting advice, my boy:
"Ponder well the path of thy feet;"
Through the labyrinths of youth make Virtue your guide,
Through Virtue you'll triumph, whatever betide,
And Life's record will thus be complete.

◆

THE BLACK DOCTOR;

OR, THE

Prophecy of the Voodoo King.

AN HISTORICAL TALE OF THE SPANISH RULE IN LOUISIANA.

By WILLIAM HENRY PECK,
Professor of History in the University of the State of Louisiana.

CHAPTER XV.

OLD JUAN AND THE CHEST.

But while the Senor was still examining the ring, and before he again spoke, a tall, lean man, of very spare frame, and thin, hawk-like visage, entered the shop. Long, thin mustaches, a peaked beard, and keen gray eyes, deep set in their sockets, high and prominent cheek-bones, sunken cheeks, and a restless expression around the wide mouth and thin lips, gave to the face of this new-comer a marked individuality of countenance.

A face like this makes an impression, when once seen, that never fades from a memory at all retentive.

"Diablos!" thought Perez, as his eyes fell upon the face of the new-comer. "The man that asked so many questions of me, twelve years ago, when I was in the cell!—the Russian who came with the money-broker Samuels! The man who tried to make me tell him all I knew about Isadora Raymundo!"

Immediately after this man came in the fruit-seller, Baptista, with a bunch of bananas in one hand, and three oranges in the other.

Baptista came in running, passed the other man ere the latter had taken his third step into the shop, placed the fruit upon the counter, yelled out something rapidly, and ran away as hastily as he had come in.

The next instant his cry of "fresh fruit to sell" was heard in the street.

That which he had yelled as he placed the fruit on the counter was in thieves' jargon, understood perfectly by Gomaza and Perez, but not by the Senor, nor by the man who had just entered.

That which Baptista said in thieves' slang was, translated, this:

"This stranger is the servant of the Senor. He is also the man who, with the Senor, examined the records of the captain's trial, twelve years ago."

The Senor looked up from the ring he was examining, on hearing the yell of the fruit-seller, and the next instant he saw the hawk-faced man.

"Ha! Ivan!" cried the Senor, in Russian. "Look at this." And stepping forward rapidly, he gave the ring to the man.

The latter, to be known as Ivan for the present, gazed at the ring but for a moment, was evidently much surprised, and exclaimed, in Russian:

"The gift of the Czar!"

"The ring of the Cross of Saint Andrew!" said the Senor, still excited.

"Take care!" cried Ivan warningly. "This man may understand Russian."

"True," replied the Senor; who then turned to Gomaza, and said, in Russian:

"If you speak or understand Russian, we will make you our confidant, and give you the full value of this ring—say one hundred thousand reals."

The pawnbroker shook his head, bowed, looked from one to the other in that helpless and expostulating way in which a man expresses his inability to understand a foreign tongue.

"I do not comprehend a single word of what the noble Senor said," he replied, in Spanish.

"It is plain that he does not," remarked Ivan, in Russe, "but let us be careful to say nothing which might give a clue to our affairs. Let us speak as if he were a Russian, and a friend of the Living Cross of St. Andrew."

"Diablos! What does he mean by the Living Cross of St. Andrew?" thought Perez.

"I told you, Ivan," continued Don Sebastian, and in Russe, "that I was coming here to buy the chest and trash of the negro Voodoo doctor. There is the chest. There are the absurd contents. Amid the latter the shopman picked up the ring, which was also a surprise to him. I have no doubt that he does not know how the ring got into the chest."

"Let your Highness—"

"Take care, Ivan."

"Oh, I am speaking in the dialect of the Cossacks now. There are many Russians who do not understand that. But, pardon. I will be more careful," said Ivan. "He must tell us all he knows about the chest."

"Noble Senor," said the pawnbroker, who did not know what the others were saying, "after you went away yesterday, I made a most minute search of that old fawn-skin vest which used to belong to Captain Sancho Perez."

"The vest in which I found the Lord's Prayer?"

"The same, noble Senor. In the buckle strap, neatly sewed up," continued the inventive pawnbroker, "I found a bank-note—"

"Aha!"

"For twelve thousand reals—"

"See! I brought you good luck, shopman."

"Very good, if the note is good, noble Senor. You mentioned a number yesterday—I have forgotten what that number was—"

"Let me see the note, shopman."

"Here it is, noble Senor," said Gomaza, taking the note from his wallet.

"Ha!" said Don Sebastian, who glanced at it, and then gave it to Ivan.

"No. 13,721!" exclaimed the latter. "That rascal Perez lied. He received that note from the Living Cross of Saint Andrew."

"Diablos!" thought Perez. "I received it in a letter written by Mercita, who doubtless wrote it under the dictation of Isadora Raymundo, who may have been the person they call The Living Cross of Saint Andrew."

"The note is good, is it not, noble Senor?" asked the pawnbroker.

"Perfectly, shopman."

"The noble Senor will give me the amount in gold?"

"We do not need its possession, Ivan—now," remarked Don Sebastian to Ivan, in Russe.

"Not now, Don Sebastian, as we have the Lord's Prayer. But it may be well to have this man tell us all he knows of the history of this old chest."

"The note is good, shopman, but I do not care to give you gold for it. Yesterday I was willing to give twice its value to simply see it. That is my affair. It will not be at all dangerous for you to use the note. But let me hear something about this old chest. I will pay liberally for the time you may lose in telling its history. But no lies—no superb inventions—no tales of pet fawns of Christopher Columbus."

"May I die a beggar, and in a mad-house—"

"Very well. Begin."

"Noble Senor, to begin, this chest used to belong to Syphaxo, a negro Voodoo—"

"Yes, yes—we know that. But where did he get the chest?"

"He told me—and I have no doubt he spoke truly, noble Senor—that he purchased the chest from another negro."

"Come, this is to lead us into a dark wilderness."

"Oh, but the name of the last negro was Juan Olio, noble Senor—an old free negro—a fisherman."

"What name?" demanded Ivan hastily.

"Juan Olio, Senor."

"Ha! By the soul of the Czarina! Wait a moment," exclaimed Ivan, darting out of the shop.

Gomaza was about to say more; but Don Sebastian said haughtily:

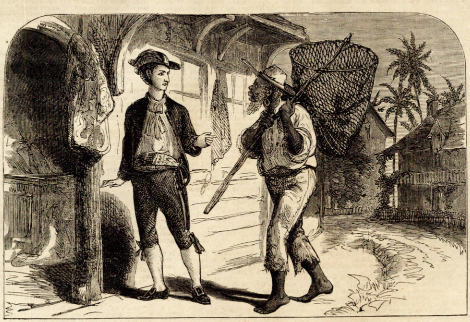
"Silence! My servant said 'wait a moment.' He is not one to speak at random. Wait."

Ivan darted out into the street as if in expectant search of some one. Not far away was an old negro, seated on the bottom of an upturned basket, sucking an orange. He was alone, and seemed quite contented. He had in his pocket an unusual amount of treasure for him: three silver coins, which he had received from Ivan a few minutes before, for guiding the latter to the pawnbroker's shop.

Ivan had said to him, as he paid him the money:

"Here is your pay, old nut-cracker of the devil!"

A very irreverent phrase, but Ivan had been annoyed as he followed his old black guide by the deliberation with which the old fellow would frequently halt to crack with stones one of the many Brazil nuts with which his pouch was filled. Ivan was in haste to meet the Senor at the pawnbroker's shop; the slowness of his guide vexed him; hence, when the negro pointed at the shop of Gomaza and said, "Dar de place, massa," Ivan had tossed the coins at him and said, "Here is your pay, old nut-cracker of the devil."



IVAN AND JUAN OLIO ENTERING THE PAWNBROKER'S SHOP.

Upon which the old negro had shouted after him:

"My name Juan Olio! Juan Olio! Juan Olio!"

Three times; so that the name was humming in the ears of Ivan like a swarm of bees when he entered the shop of the pawnbroker.

Hearing that name again so speedily, Ivan remembered it, and therefore darted out to find the man, if possible.

He was in a moment at the side of the old orange eater on the basket. Having grown thirsty from devouring Brazil nuts, the old fellow had purchased some fruit of Baptista, as the latter was near, and was now regaling himself, and muttering:

"Nut-cracker ob de debbel! Go 'long! What sort ob a name is dat for a wenerable colored Christian! Ask me to show him de way to Massa Gomaza's shop. I did. Yeth, I did. Pay me heap—dat's true. But call me—nut-cracker ob de debbel! Bin called mighty funny lot ob names since I was a piccaninny, but dat done beat 'em all! Nut-cracker ob de debbel! Reckin de debbil hab no nuts to crack—'cept hard ones like dat razor-faced white man. Yah, yah!"

He rolled up the whites of his eyes in his sugescent feeding, and beheld "the razor-faced white man" at his side.

"Ki yi!" gasped Juan, terrified lest the other had heard the epithet, and letting the half-sucked orange fall.

"Come with me, old man. Ah! what is your name?" asked Ivan.

"Juan Olio, buckra! Juan Olio. I war christen dat seventy-nine years ago, Massa. Nebber war called nut-cracker ob de debbel befo' in all my life—"

"Say no more of that, Juan, but come with me, and I will give you more money than you ever had in all your life."

The old negro slung his empty basket over his bent back, gathered up his fishing pole, and hobbled after Ivan.

"Ise in de good luck dis blessed day ob de Lord," thought Juan, during the brief time that was needed for him to arrive at the pawnbroker's shop. "Dis better than fishin' in de water. Made money dis week. Dar was de man day befo' yesterday dat gabe me one real—de man dat said 'diablos!' like Cappen Perez. Now dis razor-faced man—and mo' money. Mo' dan I eber had in all my life? Oh, no. I libed two year on what I got gib to me dat time about de young lady in de ches'—dat time I fool Cappen Perez, an' make him b'lieve I war his cook Poncho."

"Go in," said Ivan, as they arrived at the door of the pawnbroker's shop.

Juan obeyed, and being temporarily blinded by his sudden transition from the broad light of day into the gloom of the shop, was trampling upon some of the Voodoo relics of the dead Syphaxo ere he recognized that fact.

He recognized it with a yell, a howl of dismay, and would have fled from the shop had not Ivan grasped his arm and detained him.

"Now then. What is the matter with you, old fool?" demanded Ivan.

"Voodoo! Fetish! Ise'll be haunted now!" replied old Juan, whose jaws would have chattered like a pair of castanets, had he had any teeth. "I knows dem tings. I knows dat ches'. Syphaxo locked all his debbels up in dar when he died—he tole me dat—I seed him—me an' Massa Ruy, dar. I did. He told me, old Syphaxo did, dat he done put all de sperrits, de ghostes, de imps, de demoniums, de wampires, de debbils—white, black, red, blue, green, all de colors—all de fetish tings what serbed him on de yearth—he tole me he done put 'em all in dar, in dat ches'; and whomsoeber what would hereafter unlock for de first time dat ches', gwine to be buried in dat same ches'. And now who done been gone and opened he?"

"You believe that this old chest will be the coffin of the man that has unlocked it, old man?" asked Don Sebastian.

"Massa," replied old Juan, with all the gravity of firm belief, "Syphaxo was a wonderful man in de Voodoo way, and I kno's, I say I kno's, dat whoeber first unlocked dat ches' since Syphaxo de Voodoo king locked he, is gwine to hab dat same ches' for his coffin."

"Diablos!" thought Perez. "What an old ass!"

"What if I now break the chest to pieces, and burn it to ashes, old man?" said Ivan, with a grim smile on his hawk-like face.

"It can't be done, massa. De sperit ob Syphaxo guard dat ches' yet."

"Let me break it up and burn it, or throw the pieces into the street, to convince Juan that old Syphaxo lied, noble Senor," said Gomaza.

"No. He is a fanatic. He would still believe in Syphaxo. Besides, I have use for the chest, shopman."

"Ki! See dat!" exclaimed old Juan. "De noble Senor, acted on by de sperit ob de dead Voodoo king, hab use for de ches.' I hope no one here was de fated first to unlock dat fetish ches'."

"No one," replied Don Sebastian.

"De noble Senor may take de ches' to Spain, to anywhar—he may take it to de middle ob de sea, and trow it to de waves, but de waves will drift it to de shore, for it was Voodvooed by Syphaxo wid his last breff on dis yearth, and must in de end be de coffin of de man, woman or chile dat first turned dat key in dat lock since de deff ob de great Voodoo king Syphaxo."

Don Sebastian and Ivan shrugged their shoulders and smiled, much amused.

"Diablos! what nonsense!" thought the spying Perez.

As for the superstitious pawnbroker, he mopped his face, and muttered:

"I am very glad that I did not unlock it."

"Massa hidalgos," continued the garrulous old negro, irritated by the sneer on the thin lips of "the razor-faced white man," "dat ches' was a wonderful ches' even befo' de Voodoo king held his fetish over it. I myself saw a dead man come out ob dat ches' to turn into a live young woman."

"Aha!" exclaimed the Senor and Ivan, exchanging glances.

Perez, from his cunning ambush, noted this exchange of glances.

"And when did you see that miracle, old man?" asked the Senor.

"I judge it war just about twelbe year ago, Massa."

Again the Senor and Ivan exchanged quick glances.

"Tell us all about it, Juan," said Ivan, "and you shall have the mate to this."

Ivan gave Juan a golden coin, and added:

"But no lies, old man."

Forthwith Juan told that story which he had told to Sancho Perez, and added:

"Dar war a lot ob pots and pans in de ches', which de two men took outen de ches'—and den a kind ob tray, which had kept de pans and de like from touching de young woman when she war in dar. I sole dem cooking tings when de people war gone. I plugged up de holes and sole de ches' to Syphaxo jus' befo' Massa Gomaza bought Syphaxo. I nebber tole Syphaxo anyting about de people dat had owned the ches'."

The Senor and Ivan listened with marked attention to the old negro's story, asking questions at times, and when Juan had concluded, Don Sebastian said:

"Do you remember whether the old man and the young woman ever spoke of having lost anything?"

"Well, Massa, dey mos'ly talked in a language old Juan nebber heerd befo'; and it was only a word now and then dat eeder ob de tree said in Spanish," replied Juan, who of course was now speaking the "negro-Spanish" used by the blacks of Havana, and which we give as nearly as possible in the "negro-English" of our country.

"But, Massa Senor," continued Juan, "dis colored person am no fool. Juan did see dat de young woman had loss someting. Dey upsot dat ches', and dey took eberyting outen it, and dey sarched eberywhere in de ches'. But whateber dey sarched for dey nebber find it in de ches', an' as dey made sich a close examination ob de ches', I reckon it war nebber loss in dat. An' de young woman hersef war not sure what she had loss war loss in de ches'."

"How know you that, Juan?" asked the Senor.

"Caze I heerd her say to de older man, in 'ply to someting he ask her in that lingo Juan didn't know, 'No, I not sart'in I did not lose it in San Domingo.' She say dat in Spanish, sare."

"Bravo! And what do you think the *it* was, old man?"

"Massa, de young woman she look mity hard and solemn like at her fingers as she said dat, like person thinking back, tryin' to recollect like, sare, and old Juan he say to hisself, 'She done loss a ring somewhar.' Dat was old Juan's opinion, sah."

"You are a sharp old bird, Juan."

"Yeth, sah! I bin called Juan de fish-hawk, 'count ob my sharpnis, Massa. Took mity sharp niggar, sah, to fool Captain Sancho Perez! Ki, yi! Juan pull de wool ober de cappen's eyes dat time Juan call hisself Poncho! Yah, yah!"

"It is plain," said the Senor, in Russe, to Ivan, "that we have struck upon the right trail, Ivan."

"A trail now twelve years cold, Don Sebastian."

"Cold in Cuba, but it may still be warm and fresh yonder in New Orleans, Ivan. I am confident that Sancho Perez was in some way entangled or employed in the mystery, and that much may be learned from the slave woman he sold to Madame Ruth Varlville."

"Diablos! It is undoubtedly Isadora Raymundo that these two are seeking," thought Perez. "And as it was my Angelique that was in the chest, the ring must have been lost by her; and so she, it is very evident, was in some way concerned in the Isadora Raymundo mystery. By seeing and getting the negress Mercita in my power, I may kill two birds with one stone! Caramba! three birds with one stone: first, I may find Isadora Raymundo—a million maledictions on that person! second, I may unravel the plot of this Senor; and third, I may find my Angelique. Give me revenge and the knowledge that my Angelique is happy, and, diablos! life may have a pleasure left for Sancho Perez!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE OATH OF JUAN.

To the last remark of Don Sebastian, Ivan replied:

"The slave woman may be dead; Madame Varlville may be dead; the Living Cross of Saint Andrew may be dead; all for whom we sought twelve years ago may be dead."

"Very true, Ivan; and it is as true that some, if not all, may still be alive," replied Don Sebastian, with stern severity in his tone. "This I do know—my hate for the man and my passion for the woman are alive. The Czarina demands full proof of the death—"

"Take care, Senor," said Ivan warningly. "Let's retire a little."

"True," replied the Senor, as he and Ivan retired to the rear of the shop. "We will say no more of that now. But I adhere to the plan of which I told you yesterday. It flashed, I may say, into conception in my brain yesterday morning in this shop."

"The Voodoo plan?"

"Yes."

"But can you play the part, Senor?"

"Well. You know I was for nearly a year a captive among the negroes of the Gold Coast. But I may need a little practice. We must make the acquaintance of some Voodoo doctor in Havana—"

"Better defer all until we shall be assured that Madame Varlville—who may explain the mystery of the Lord's Prayer, evidently written by some one in her house when Sancho Perez sold the slave woman—still lives, or that the slave woman is still in New Orleans. The latter may know something."

"No. We will go to New Orleans prepared to play our parts. If those we hope to find are there, they must still be vigilant. If we find that they are dead, the preparations we may make here will not do harm, nor be a loss. Much that I need in my intended plan is here." The Senor here made a gesture toward the chest and its late contents. "But neither you nor I are familiar with New Orleans and its vicinity. To remedy that, we must purchase, if possible, a negro who has lived there. Perhaps this old Juan may serve."

"He is old, garrulous, and doubtless his own master. In fact, he has told us that he is."

"Fear and gratitude and self-interest made him faithful to Lopez Soares, the man he calls Smolo, or Lenski, and to the young woman. The same may make him valuable to us. He stated, you may remember, that he used to live in New Orleans, many years ago."

"Diablos!" thought Perez, who heard quite distinctly every word of this conversation. "They mean to go to New Orleans!—to play the part of Voodoo doctors!—to take old Juan Olio with them!"

"Well, we will talk all this over at our hotel," said Ivan. "The schooner I purchased cannot be made ready for the voyage for some days."

"And in the mean time we may discover more of the movements made in Cuba twelve years ago, by the Living Cross of Saint Andrew. See that all those things be replaced in the chest, and that the chest be taken care of. This box I will keep."

The box of which the Senor spoke contained those seeds which Gomaza had said Syphaxo called the mad seed.

The two then left the rear of the shop, and advanced to the front; where old Juan was amusing the pawnbroker with some marvelous story of the wonderful powers of the great Voodoo king Syphaxo.

"Juan," said Don Sebastian, "are you afraid to touch these things?"

"No, Massa. That is, to touch 'em wid de greatest reberence, Massa. I war nigh skeered to deff when I foun' old Juan Olio jess a tramplin' on de sacred tings ob de great Syphaxo."

"Then replace them, with reverence, in the chest, Juan. I will wait until it is done."

Juan, after many absurd gesticulations and speeches over the matter, obeyed.

"Lock the chest, Juan, and give me the key."

"Yeth, Massa Senor," said Juan, as he obeyed. "But den Ise sorry for de one, man, woman, or chile, dat unlocked dis 'chanted ches'!"

"That may be, Juan," replied Don Sebastian, "but it was not I, nor you, nor any one here. Now I am going to give the chest to your care for a time. You must come with me to my hotel. I shall want you to dust, cleanse and polish those vials, bones, relics and the rest—with reverence, old man."

"Oh yeth, Massa. Wid reberence ob course, or de rest of dis old colored hidalgo, Juan Olio, will be haunted by de sperit ob de great Syphaxo! Why, noble Massa," said Juan enthusiastically, "I do so reberence dese tings in dat dar ches', that if I war to take an oaf on dat ches', and dem tings in dat ches', I would no more tink o' breaking dat oaf dan—dan I would ob breaking my neck! No, sah!"

"We will remember that, Ivan," said Don Sebastian in Russe.

"Diablos! So will I," thought Perez, in his covert.

"Yeth, Massa," continued talkative old Juan, "any colored pusson dat ebber knew de great Syphaxo, would no more tink ob not keepin' true any oaf her or him, or him or her, or dey or dem, or dem and dey, mout swear to, by and ober dem relics in dar, dan him or her, or day or dem would tink ob cuttin' dare own t'roat, sah!"

"Very well, Juan. Now come with me—but no! Remain here with the chest," commanded the Senor, "until I send a cart or some such vehicle for it. Then do you come with the chest to where it will be taken. You, shopman, have no objection?"

"None in the world, noble Senor," replied the pawnbroker; and the Senor with Ivan left the shop, after telling old Juan that the chest should be sent for within an hour or two.

Old Juan, much inflated with the importance of his trust, and delighted with handling the money which he had received, squatted on the floor near the chest, and began a long story of some of his many recollections; while the pawnbroker gazed after the Senor and Ivan from the door of the shop.

"They have turned the corner," said Gomaza suddenly. "They are not in sight."

"Close the door—hard and fast," commanded Perez, from his place of concealment. "Diablos!"

"Who dar? Hi! Who dar?" yelled old Juan, scrambling to his feet, and greatly terrified. "Who dat say—diablos?"

"Silence!" replied the pawnbroker, as he closed the street door and locked it.

The shop, like the rear room, had but one window; and though the shutters of this window were left open by Gomaza, it was impossible for any one in the street to see anything that might transpire within the shop, and but a subdued light now pervaded the latter.

As Gomaza closed the street door, Perez entered from the rear room.

"Diablos!" said he, in his way of twelve years before. "Diablos!" he repeated, advancing toward old Juan. "Ha! you were a Poncho, eh? You pulled the wool over my eyes, did you, you old deceiving rascal! Diablos! I am Captain Sancho Perez. Silence, or I fire!"

Old Juan would already have filled the shop with such yells of terror as might have aroused the dead, had power to yell been his ere he saw the muzzle of a pistol close to his head; but on seeing the weapon, he fell to the floor in a heap, and chattered for mercy.

The face of Perez was hidden by the black bandage he continued to wear, nor could old Juan have recognized the face beneath the scarf, had he seen it; but the ears of the old man had never forgotten the voice and expletive of the ex-slave-dealer. He would have recognized them, even had not their possessor cried out, "I am Captain Sancho Perez."

"Spar de life ob de poor old niggar, Massa Cappen!" gasped Juan, crouching on the floor, and trying to keep the chest between his head and the muzzle of the pistol. "Ole Juan no worth de powder an' lead it take to kill him. Spar de ole man, Massa Cappen!"

"I will, on one condition, Juan," replied Perez, with terrible sternness.

"Anyting, Massa Cappen! Old man promise an' do anyting an' eberyting."

"You must swear a vow to me, Juan."

"Ole Juan swear to anyting an' eberyting, Massa Cappen."

"Cross your hands upon the chest, Juan. You must swear faith to me on that—on the Voodoo chest of Syphaxo, by all that is in it, ever has been in it, ever may be in it, and by the ghost of Syphaxo."

"Oh! de good Lor' hab mercy! dat a dreadfu' ting to do, Massa Cappen!" gasped Juan.

"Is it worse than to be shot through the head, old fool? Diablos!" said Perez, thrusting the muzzle of his pistol against old Juan's bald forehead.

"I will swear as you 'mand me, Massa Cappen!" groaned the terrified old man. "Spar de poor old niggar, Massa Cappen, an' he be your dog all de days ob he life!"

"On your knees, then. So. Cross your hands on the chest. So. Now swear, by the ghost of the Voodoo king whose demons may be in this chest, never to let any one know or even suspect that Captain Sancho Perez is alive; and to obey him at all times. To be his dog—diablos! that is it! Swear to be his dog!"

"All dat I swear, Massa Cappen."

"If any one else ever asks you or forces you to take an oath upon this chest," continued Perez, "swear now, by the ghost of the Voodoo king, not to permit any after oath that you may take, to make you less the dog of Captain Sancho Perez—to bark or bite, to come or go, to find or hide, to take or fetch, only as his dog."

"I swear to do all dat, Massa Cappen, by the gostes of de great Syphaxo. Oh, de Lor'! oh, de Lor'! oh, de Lor'!" suddenly yelled the old man, recoiling from the chest, and rolling over and over on the floor.

There was good cause for this sudden increase of the fright of old Juan.

He had scarcely uttered the words, "by the gostes ob de great Syphaxo!" when a noise like the smothered report of a pistol, followed by a sound like the hissing of a thousand adders, filled the interior of the chest.

"Oh, de Lor'! oh, de Lor'!" cried Juan, as he rolled over and over on the floor. "He heerd my oaf! he heerd my oaf!"

"Saints and Patriarchs!" muttered the now terrified and always superstitious pawnbroker, as he increased his distance from the chest by spasmodically leaping over the counter. "Holy Abraham! San Iago! what is that? The devil is in the chest!"

"Puf!" thought Perez, after a moment's reflection, but keeping his thoughts between his lips. "Puf! One of the old fraud's bottles or vials has burst, and the contents of another or others are forcing out the corks. Pop! there goes another."

But aloud he said to the old negro:

"You hear?"

"Lor' sabe me! I hears!" gasped Juan, trembling.

"You know now that the spirit of the Voodoo king is shaking up the dry bones in there, to let you know that Syphaxo, who was my slave, has heard your oath."

"Oh, yeth—dat is de holy truff, Massa. And ole Juan gwine to keep dat Voodoo oath."

"Very well. See that you do, for even if the spirit of your great Voodoo king shall not punish you, and haunt you if you do not keep that oath, I—diablos!—*I* will! Now listen. You are to see the Senor who now owns the chest. If he wishes you to go to New Orleans with him—"

"To go to New Orleans wid him! Me?"

"Yes, you."

"What for the Senor wish dat? What ole Juan Olio got for to be did in New Orleans?" asked the old negro, amazed. "Dis old colored hidalgo an't got no manner ob biznis in dat place. No, sah! He don't go dar. Nebber! 'Spise dat place, I does. Usen for to lib dar—"

"Silence! If the Senor desires you to go to New Orleans with him," resumed Perez sternly, "you must go."

"De good Lor'!"

"I command you."

"Yeth, Massa Captain."

"He may ask you to find, here in Havana, some negro who is a Voodoo doctor. I think he will. You know several?"

"Yeth, Massa. I knows two—but needer ob dem a great Voodoo priest like de great Syphaxo. Day is smart in dare trade, but dar nebber was a greater Voodoo dan de great Syphaxo."

"You are to say nothing of them to the Senor, if he asks about Voodoo doctors or Voodoo priests," commanded Perez, while the amazed and bewildered pawnbroker stared.

"You are to reply that Senor Ruy Gomaza knows where to find the greatest Voodoo doctor and priest in Cuba."

"Holy Isaac!" thought the wondering pawnbroker.

"You are to say that Senor Ruy Gomaza is the owner, the master of this wondrously gifted Voodoo priest," continued Perez.

"By all the eleven thousand virgins!" thought the amazed pawnbroker, glaring wildly at Perez.

"You are to tell the Senor," continued the latter, "that the name of this Voodoo priest is Isadora Raymundo. Repeat the name."

"Isadora Raymundo. I often heerd dat name when de great Syphaxo war alibe," said Juan. "Dat name war on he cane—de great Voodoo cane."

"Remember it. It is the name of the Voodoo priest you are to speak of to the Senor. Raymundo. You are to tell the Senor that Raymundo is a mulatto, and that he has no nose."

"Dat he hab no nose!" repeated old Juan, rolling up the whites of his eyes in wonder.

"Oh! I see!" thought the pawnbroker. "What a bold—what a dangerous plot!"

"You will be sure to tell the Senor," continued Perez, "that Raymundo has no nose; that you have not seen him for several years; that he used to live in New Orleans; that he was terribly burned by accident after he left New Orleans—so badly that he lost his nose, and was dreadfully scarred in the face—so much so that no one who knew him before could recognize him; that he has not been in New Orleans since the accident; that he can speak two languages well—English and Spanish—and a little French, but no other; that he is perfectly acquainted with New Orleans and all its vicinity. Can you remember all this, Juan?"

"Of course, Massa Cappen. Juan Olio sharp, he is."

"Very well. Be sharper than you ever were in all your life now—or, diablos! you shall find how sharp my knife is. When you leave the Senor, come at once to this place. The Senor gave you gold. I pay in gold also;" and as Perez spoke, he gave the old man an onza.

The unexpected possession of so broad and heavy a coin of gold filled the heart of old Juan with delight.

"Makin' money!" said he gleefully—"making heap ob money! Gwine to come to be rich in my old-age. Oh, yeth, Ise de dog ob Cappen Sancho Perez!" And then to himself, with sudden doubt, "May be dat wusser dan to be nut-cracker to de debbel."

"Be faithful to me, and I will pay you well, Juan. Your service may not last many weeks. Be false to me, and, diablos! I will boil you to death in fish oil. Open your door now, Gomaza. I have no more to say at present."

Having thus spoken, Perez returned to his hiding-place.

"I am a mere puppet in his hands," muttered the cowardly pawnbroker, as he threw open his street door, "and yet—some day, some day."

He had scarcely turned again into his shop when a man came in, saying:

"I come for a chest. My cart is outside. Here is the order."

"It is all right, my man," replied Gomaza, after glancing at the paper the man presented. "There is the chest. You are to go with it, Juan."

"Yeth," thought Juan, as he followed the man who took away the Voodoo chest, "it 'peers like dis colored hidalgo got to go wid dat ches'. Somehow old Juan got tangled in a snarl wid dat ches'. 'Spect dat ches' gwine to New Orleans, an' ole Juan got to go wid um. May be dis chile see dat ches' de coffin ob de man dat first unlocked um. Who know? If sure ob dat, reckon Juan willin' to go to New Orleans. Like to foller dat ches' to de end. What bait de cappen got in he t'roat now? De debbel fishin' for him, ob course. Wonder de debbel nebber done cotch de cappen long afo'."

Leaving old Juan to follow "dat ches'," we will return for a time to the shop of the pawnbroker.

Customers came in immediately after the departure of Juan. Some came to buy the sordid articles Gomaza had for sale, and many came to sell or pawn articles as sordid and paltry.

As we have said, Ruy Gomaza carried the business on as a shield to more lawless enterprises. Yet he was forced to play the part of an avaricious and miserly pawnbroker, to avert suspicion from the really great wealth of which he was the secret possessor, and from the many nefarious practices by which he had accumulated that wealth.

He was believed to be a miser, but few even suspected a tenth of his wealth. And as few of those who were ever engaged in nefarious affairs suspected that much of their lawless gains went to enrich the wary pawnbroker. He was indeed known as a chief among the lawless, only to a few of the chiefs of the lawless.

With petty thieves and robbers he never had anything directly to do in the way of receiving, buying, or concealing their plunder, except on rare occasions, and then only in the character of an innocent and unsuspecting purchaser, or friend. He dealt as a criminal only with the great leaders of criminals. He never betrayed, and he never was betrayed. Petty offenders against the law would have betrayed him to the authorities, for the sake of the standing reward offered by the government to informers of crime. Great offenders, whose secret crimes, if revealed, would have placed them in the hands of the executioner, alone knew that the pawnbroker was a violator of the laws. Chiefs of thieves, whose lives were in the power of Ruy Gomaza, purchased the plunder of inferior thieves and sold it to him, or as he dictated.

Only such daring offenders as Sancho Perez, or wily criminals as Baptista, the pretended fruit-seller, were in any degree the comrades of Ruy Gomaza.

To the mass he was known only as a miserly pawnbroker and old clothes dealer. He had lived and thrived for years in Cuba, and not once been suspected by the authorities.

Keeping up his supposed harmless and insignificant character as usual, the pawnbroker attended to his shabby customers, after the departure of Juan and the chest, as if this squabbling for mere farthings over the purchase or sale of some second-hand article were the main business of his life.

This daily pretended battling for mere nothings had grown upon the man, so that it had become a habit, or rather, a second nature; and though in some of his lawless enterprises thousands and tens of thousands of reals were received by him, or ventured by him, he seemed to be as pleased in cheating a squalid child of poverty of a farthing, in one of his shop bargains, as in adroitly defrauding the government of large sums of revenue.

He had an object in life, and in trying to become enormously rich. He intended, and had intended for years, to accumulate a fortune of ten millions of reals—that is, a quarter of a million pounds sterling, or say one million of dollars. This attained, he intended to transfer his wealth and himself to England, and there, under a new name, to live a life of ease and splendor.

He had accumulated to within three millions of the desired ten, when the unexpected return of Sancho Perez deprived him of his control of one million, and threatened to involve him in new dangers.

So long as the outlaw remained in his dwelling, the danger of Gomaza's arrest, and that of the convict, was most imminent.

He was mortally afraid of Perez, and dared not attempt to put him out of the way by violence. Perez, wary as he was daring, had told him that certain of his old comrades knew where he was, and that if he were to fall by secret violence, or by treachery, those comrades would bury their daggers in the heart of Ruy Gomaza, or cast him into the power of the government.

Therefore the pawnbroker dared not attempt either violence or treachery toward his unwelcome guest. He was in the position of a man who is carrying a flaring, sparkling torch through a great dark cavern, the floor of which is full of fathomless pits, and the sides of which are straw and gunpowder. If he extinguishes the torch, he will certainly fall into one of the fatal pits. If he keeps the torch aflame, a spark from it may at any instant surround him with fire, and consume him to ashes, or blow him to atoms. And if he does not soon escape from this cavern, he will starve.

Such was the position of our pawnbroker, and he knew it well.

He must try to make his way out with the lighted torch—that is, he must go on with Sancho Perez until he could get him out of Cuba.

"That achieved," thought Gomaza, even as he waited upon his customers on that day, "I will turn all I have into bills on the Bank of England, and put the ocean between me and Cuba, and this convict with his Isadora Raymundo plot, for ever."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

* * *

HERBERT'S RECOMPENSE.

BY FRANCES HENSHAW BADEN.

"Good Heavens! What is that you have got there, Herbert?" exclaimed Mrs. Ashley, as her only son, a young man of twenty-five, came into his mother's reception room, holding by the hand a little girl of about seven years.

"Why, mother, your own eyes can answer that question. What is the use of looking so wildly at the child? Poor little thing! she needs comforting, not questioning," answered Herbert a little petulantly, seating himself and gathering the little wee thing up in his arms, saying, "There, there, don't tremble so, baby; no one will hurt you. You are *my* child now, and I'll take care of you too." This in a firm, decided tone.

Mrs. Ashley was still gazing, if possible, more amazed than ever by her son's words and manner.

Just then the door opened, and in floated a vision of beauty, grace, and gossamer drapery. She started back, held up her hands, and cried out:

"Mercy! What is that? An infant witch? Where did you pick her up, Herbert? In the woods, dropped by her mother witch, in her ride on a broomstick through the air?"

"Georgia, for shame! How can you talk so? You frighten the child."

"Frighten *her*? I declare, if I was with her alone I should be frightened! Dear! what wild eyes she has! Don't let her come near me, Herbert, please," continued the dainty beauty, with affected concern.

"Georgia, I think your words and manner unkind and unwomanly—"

"Thank you, sir."

"Well, I do. You see here a poor child who should claim your sympathy and kindly care, and still you talk and look as if she was some wild animal."

"It is a human then—a child, hey?" asked Georgia.

Truly the wee thing had a strange, wild, unchildlike look: a little, thin, pale, dark face, almost covered by the long uncombed black hair which fell over it, and out of which gleamed the wildest, largest dark eyes. Herbert pushed her hair gently back, and laid her head soothingly against his broad breast.

"I'll tell you about her, and perhaps I'll find your hearts, which must surely have escaped your keeping," Herbert said, looking from Georgia to his mother sternly.

"You have heard me speak of the old violinist in Second street. Well, this morning, in passing there, I saw a crowd, and went in to inquire the cause. The old man was dead, and this poor child almost wild with grief and fright. They were about to carry her off to the Alms-house, Home of the Destitute, or some such place. She saw me—and really I do believe mine was the only face there that expressed any sympathy or pity for her; at any rate it must have been so to her, for she ran to me and cried out, 'Don't let them take me, please!'

"And I would not. There, that is about all of the story, except that I sent off the crowd, closed the door, found an undertaker, gave him money to bury the old man somewhere other than in the potter's-field, and came home with the child, and intend to try and comfort her as best I can for her grandfather's loss. Now are you either, or both, going to help me; or have I to go and put her in some boarding-school? I've made up my mind to do one good action, if never before or again, and I'll go through with it."

There was rather a contemptuous expression on Georgia's fair face, and Mrs. Ashley said:

"Really, Herbert, you need a guardian—some one to hold your purse for you. In your boy days, you used to be ever doing some such wild trick—bringing home or finding some paupers to care for—spending your money most foolishly. But I had thought years had brought you wisdom, discretion—"

"Say heartlessness, mother; that will better express it, I guess. What I've done to-day in spending money has not amounted to as much as last night at the opera, and the supper after. Shall I take the child away?" he asked.

"Are you determined to keep her?" was the question in reply.

"As long as I live, and she wishes to remain."

Mrs. Ashley saw the determination glowing in her son's fine eyes, and answered:

"Then, choosing the lesser of evils, I say keep her here."

"You will be kind to her, mother?"

There was entreaty and command both in his words and looks.

"What is your name, child?" Mrs. Ashley asked, coming forward and trying to speak pleasantly.

"Avonia. Grandpa called me Avon always. May I stay? I'll be very good. Please!"

Under the kind care of Mrs. Ashley's housekeeper, who was always glad to do Herbert's bidding, little Avon grew out of her wild looks, and was no longer the "ugly little witch" that Georgia called her.

Herbert Ashley was one of the wealthiest young men in P——. He had a fine mind and talents; still had never accomplished anything in life. Having more money than he knew just what to do with, of course there was no necessity for his earning more.

Georgia Clayton was a distant cousin, and a great favorite with Mrs. Ashley. It was her dearest wish that Georgia and Herbert should be united, and Herbert had acquiesced in her wish. Georgia was beautiful, and as he loved no one else, he had offered his hand to his mother's pet, and been accepted.

But Georgia was too fond of her freedom, and being admired, flattered, and courted by many, to agree to be married very soon. And so they had been engaged quite six months when little Avon became one of the family.

The child's devotion to Herbert was wonderful in one so young. If a shadow rested on his brow, in a moment it covered hers, and her lips would quiver continually until she found a chance to whisper:

"Are you hurt? Has Avon hurt you?"

If Herbert grew sick, she would neither eat nor be won away to play with the neighboring children—only linger by his side, or hide somewhere in his room.

Georgia disliked her. In truth, she did not want any one else to share Herbert's love; not that her own was so great, only because she was exacting and jealous. Little Avon was frequently the cause of discord between Herbert and his betrothed; at times the latter declaring that Avon should be sent away. But Herbert remained true to his determination, his affection for the little friendless orphan bringing forth the noblest impulses of his nature.

Time passed on until five years had gone by, and still the marriage was postponed from time to time, Georgia being better contented to have it so, certain of her lover's constancy, and he leaving the arrangements and the time to his mother. Several times he had rather urged their union, but when Georgia pleaded for longer delay, he comforted himself with his books and little Avon's singing. Wonderfully the child could sing; and the master that Herbert had procured for her, predicted a brilliant future for Avon, if Herbert would resign her to the musical world.

As Avon advanced in intellect, and grew daily more entertaining and lovable, Georgia's dislike grew greater, until it came to an issue—that Herbert should give up one or the other. Avon must be sent away, or Georgia would immediately break her engagement.

Now we can well think that Herbert was not a very ardent and devoted lover, or he would not have waited so patiently all those years for Georgia, when there was no reason for the postponements from time to time, but only her whims. So when Georgia commanded him to send "his child," as he called Avon, away, he declared that under no circumstances would he give her up—that no one in the world loved him as truly as did that child, and he would be true to his self-imposed charge.

Somehow this stormy interview was either heard, or came to Avon's knowledge, and Mrs. Brown the housekeeper went to Herbert with an anxious manner, and told him Avon acted so strangely, that she feared she was either ill or in great trouble. Herbert bade the good woman watch their charge closely. That night she came again to Herbert, and drew him hastily to the window, in time to see a little figure stealing quietly down the garden walk. In a second Herbert was after her, and followed unobserved and closely behind. On and on she sped, down to the river, beside which she stopped. The moonbeams shone brightly on the little pale face upraised to heaven, as she knelt a moment, and cried:

"Forgive, forgive, please, Father in heaven! Pity and forgive! What else can I do? Friendless but for him, and his happiness I must secure!"

She sprang forward then to the little rustic bridge, from which Herbert knew she intended to leap. Quickly after her, only just in time to draw her back, fainting in his arms.

For many days she lay tossing wildly with fever, hovering between life and death.

While watching over the little one so dear, there came a terrible blow to Herbert and his mother. All their long enjoyed possessions were swept away—all gone in the fearful crash of '57.

Georgia very soon relieved her friends of any anxiety on her account, by accepting and marrying a young attaché who had been dangling about her for several months.

Avon slowly came back to health, strength, and after a while to cheerfulness, when she saw that Georgia's loss did not grieve Herbert at all. In fact he seemed relieved by her marriage.

In the days that followed, Herbert found it very necessary to put his shoulder to the wheel, to obtain the means to support his mother, Avon and himself in comfort. The grandeur of other times had to be resigned, and poor Mrs. Ashley, ever sighing, had to try and accommodate herself to the change. So, intent in his pursuits, Herbert failed to notice the many mysterious and confidential meetings between Avon and her old music-master.

Two years more passed away, and when she was over fourteen years, little Avon was missing. Days passed into weeks and months, and all inquiries, searches and advertising proved of no avail. Avon was lost.

Bitterly Mrs. Ashley spoke of her ingratitude, saying that when the time came that the girl could have returned some of their kindness, she had deserted them.

A little note she left for Herbert, blotted by her tears, telling him that through her great love and gratitude she had left him. She could no longer burden him with the care of her; that if with him, she knew he would not let her work too, so she had fled; but not to be uneasy; she was safe with those who would help her to work, and protect her from harm.

Thus three more years passed, bringing no more tidings to the anxious heart of Herbert Ashley. Often he felt as if he must start and hunt the world over for his child. And this he would have attempted, most likely, had he possessed his former wealth.

From across the ocean came accounts of a new star of unsurpassed beauty and talent in the musical firmament. All Europe proclaimed her the Queen of Song. A few months more, and the papers announced the glad tidings that our States should have the pleasure of welcoming the wonderful singer. The night came for her first appearance. Herbert Ashley had thought not of going. In fact he spent but little money in such treats, finding ready use for every dollar then.

However, that afternoon, much to his surprise, he met, quite near his place of business, old Master Corsiné, whom he had not seen since the time of Avon's disappearance. The master pressed him to go to the opera, tendering him and forcing him to accept tickets for himself and mother—reserved seats, which the old man said had been given him, and which he should not use, as he had been engaged by the managers for some duty during the evening.

So Herbert and his mother found themselves seated in the most desirable part of the opera-house.

Never had P—— welcomed such a glorious voice; and never did an audience more fully express their appreciation.

Herbert Ashley's eyes had never once wandered from the lovely prima donna. As one entranced he sat.

When the opera was over, and the audience wildly calling for the queen of beauty and song, she came forth, to be almost covered and hidden by flowery tributes. Still remaining, still motionless, only gazing on the form so familiar, yet so strange, Ashley made no move to retire until his mother aroused him by saying:

"Come, Herbert; we are almost the only ones left. Has your mind been entirely carried away by this beautiful singer?"

He turned and asked:

"Mother, who is she?"

"Why, are you crazy? Does not the programme in your hand tell you?"

"No—yes—"

Just then Master Corsiné came to them, and said:

"Come with me, I beg you. An old friend waits to see you."

They followed. Another moment and the beautiful girl was clasped to Herbert's bosom, as he cried, in joyous welcome:

"Avon, my little child! found at last!"

The triumphant ending of Master Corsiné's labor was more than the old man's feeble strength could long bear. The joy of having the world acknowledge his little pupil's worth was too great. Soon after his return to the city from which he had taken her less than four years before, and ere their engagement there was concluded, Avon's dear old friend and teacher had passed from earth.

She could not travel again without a friend. "A master" she must have, she said, and plead with Herbert to be her guardian again.

He could not resist her—he never could in other days. But he knew not what heart trials he would have to bear. When the proudest sons of his own and other lands knelt at her feet and wooed her, he would turn in agony away, lest the time had come when he must resign her to another's love.

Dearer daily she grew to him. What was the love of years gone, to the love of the present? He had thought his little child was dearer than any other could ever be. But oh! what was such affection to the feeling which filled his heart then? Yet the time must come, sooner or later, when Avon would be won from him.

One young man to whom his darling had seemed kinder than to all others, came and begged for his influence to gain a favorable reception from the lovely Avon.

"Why not?" thought Herbert. "This man is worthy of her in every way. As well him, or better perhaps, than any other."

And so he promised to help the suitor. And so to do, he sought Avon.

"He is worthy of you, my child."

"Yes, I know it," she said. "But I do not love him."

"Can he not win your love, my child?"

She shook her pretty little head.

"He worships you, Avon. You will never find one more worthy."

For the first time in her life she seemed angry and rebellious to her guardian, and with eyes filled with tears she cried out:

"Why do you try to make me love any one? You are tired of me. You—you don't love me any more, I know."

"Avon, my child, do not talk to me thus. You know not what you are doing—how fearfully you are trying me," Herbert said, his voice broken and full of emotion.

"Then why will you try to send me from you? Once you would have kept me at any cost. Why not now? Let me stay with you. Guardy, send him and all others away."

"Avon, my child, I do love you as dearly—oh, if I dared tell you. But, my little one, a day must come when you will learn another love than that you bear for your old friend. And then I shall have to give you up. Oh, my child, go; run away again; leave me before I forget your youth and my age—forget all but my—"

"No, no, Guardy. Herbert, I will not go. Tell me how much you love your little Avon. Do you think it is half as much as her love for you?"

"Hush, child! Tempt me not."

She was at his feet, her beautiful eyes eagerly searching his.

"Tell me if more than mother, father, all on earth, Guardy—do you love me thus?" she whispered.

"My Avon! my little child! next to God, who sent you to me."

"Then keep me, Herbert. Forget all and everything but Avon's love, which is as your own. I have never loved but you."

And so Herbert Ashley's day of reward came. Little Avon brought him more than the wealth of other days; and better far than that, she gave him her heart's true and only love.

* * *

HANNAH.

BY ANNA SHEILDS.

"You might do better, John."

Mrs. Williams spoke fretfully, as if the news told to her by her only son was not pleasant for her to hear.

"Better, mother!"

What a ringing, clear voice it was! So strong and hearty, as if to match the tall stalwart figure, the bright brown eyes, and handsome, sunshiny face of John Williams.

"Better!" and now a hearty laugh rang out. "As if there lived a better woman than Hannah Coyle!"

"But, John, she is only a shop girl."

"She won't be a shop girl when she is my wife. I am not a rich man, but my salary will make a comfortable home for all of us."

"She will turn me out of doors, like enough."

"Mother!" cried John, with a quiver of anger running through the surprised reproach of his voice, "you should know Hannah Coyle better than that."

Mrs. Williams' conscience gave her a sharp twinge, for she did know Hannah better than to think she would deprive a crippled old woman of her only home. But Mrs. Williams, like many a fond mother, had nursed such high hopes for the future matrimonial prospects of her boy, that she felt only a rude shock of disappointment when he told her of his engagement.

"Surely," she mused, after John had left her for his daily routine of duty, "surely John might aspire to something higher than a mere shop girl." He was well educated, well connected, and occupied a responsible position in the important firm of Howell and Somers. Mr. Somers especially was fond of John, and had invited him several times to evening parties at his own house. And Mr. Somers, besides one son, had a handsome daughter. It was not visioned in the mother's air castles that Laura Somers was a vain, extravagant and self-willed girl, ill-fitted for the wife of a rising man; nor did she stop to think that a respectful bow on one hand, and a condescending one on the other, was all the greeting that had ever passed between the young clerk and his employer's daughter. She only loved to sit in her chair, that was her prison, and fancy John the favored son-in-law of the wealthy merchant. And now John had announced himself the affianced lover of Hannah Coyle, a young shop girl, who was not even pretty, and probably never owned a silk dress in her life. "Surely," was the refrain of all this fretful reverie, "surely John might do better."

Just one little week later, Hannah Coyle came to the house where she was to have had grudging welcome as its mistress, and entering softly, went to the crippled woman's chair.

Crouched down among the cushions, seeming to have shrunk to less actual size in her misery, was the fond, proud mother, her frame shivering in convulsive agony, her words always the same:

"Oh, John! my son! my good son! Oh, Heavenly Father, let me die!"

She had been all one long night so moaning, so sobbing, utterly desolate, utterly alone.

The son she idolized, the trusted clerk, the fond, proud lover, was lying in a cell in the Tombs, waiting a trial for forgery. He had been arrested for passing a forged check, taken in the very act of attempting to cash it at the bank. The story he told of its possession was so improbable that it still further injured him, and gave personal revenge an additional motive for his punishment.

He said that Gerald Somers, the son of one of the partners of the firm, had sent him to the bank with the check. It scarcely needed the young man's indignant denial to contradict this story.

A friend in the same employ had gone to the mother and told the news as kindly and gently as possible. A fierce anger and stout pride had kept the old lady up during that trying interview; but once she was alone, she crouched in the cushions of her chair, and moaned out the utter misery of her heart.

There was no strong arm to lift her to her own room that night; there was no hearty, ringing voice to bid her good-morning. The servant who waited upon her had mysteriously vanished, having heard the words of the friend, helped herself to all the valuable trifles lying about, and walked off.

Still the feeble voice, freighted with its burden of anguish, moaned its sad refrain, when the door opened, and Hannah Coyle came in. No friend had broken the news gently to the young girl, but the shock came rudely upon her from the columns of the daily paper. It was not in one hour, or two, that she could so conquer her own grief as to leave the house; but when the first battle was over in her heart, she went at once where she knew John would have had her go.

So when, faint with her long night of misery, the mother lay moaning, a kind hand was placed upon her shoulder, and a voice clear and strong, but sweet with womanly tenderness, spoke the dearest word on earth:

"Mother!"

She looked up with haggard, bloodshot eyes, and saw bending over her a face that love, pity, and deep, unutterable tenderness had transformed into positive beauty.

"Mother," the sweet, clear voice said, "this is not what John would wish."

The mother's tears, the first she had shed, flowed fast at the sound of her son's name.

"Oh, Hannah!" she said; "you do not believe John is guilty?"

"John guilty!" the girl cried, her voice ringing like a trumpet call, her eyes flashing, and her cheek growing crimson. "Mother, how can you put the words together! You know, I know that he is innocent. Our John a thief and forger?"

"But he is in prison. He will be tried. And oh, Hannah, this is his clean shirt day too!"

"They will let me see him, mother, I think, and he can have his valise," said Hannah, not seeing anything ludicrous in this phase of maternal anxiety. "But we must work for him, mother."

"How can we work for him?"

Yet, with the doubting question, the mother sat erect, already stimulated by the idea.

"You must tell me who is the lawyer John knew best and trusted most."

"Yes. He has a second cousin, a lawyer, that he thinks a great deal of."

"Where can I find him?"

"The address is in a little book in that table drawer, where John keeps all such memorandums. Look for Jerome Williams."

"I have it. Now, mother, have you had any breakfast?"

"Oh, I can't eat. How can you think of eating!"

"You must eat, and I too, or we can be of no use to John. And, mother, until John comes back, will you let me come here to live?"

"Will I let you? Oh, Hannah, you would not leave me now!"

This was the first conversation that drew the hearts of the two women together, but the bond that knit them during the weeks that followed, was that of suffering and sorrow that would have torn the heart of the man whom they loved and trusted during his darkest hours. For the trial only separated them more surely and terribly. Twelve intelligent men, after hearing all the evidence, pronounced a verdict of guilty, and John Williams was sent to Sing Sing for ten years.

It is not in the power of my pen to describe the desolated home to which this news was carried. They never doubted him, even in the face of all the overwhelming evidence that had condemned him, but Heaven seemed to have deserted them when they knew the result of the trial.

I have said that Hannah Coyle was not pretty. Her features were plain, her eyes a soft brown, and she had a sweet mouth, that could smile bravely, and light her face for the invalid's eyes in their darkest hours. But she had one great beauty in long, heavy masses of hair, of a rich dark brown—hair whose natural coils were more beautiful than the most elaborate chignon, and hair of which she was fond and proud because John admired it.

"It is my only beauty," she would say, when old Mrs. Williams exclaimed at its profusion, "and I must keep it glossy and pretty for John's sake. He must find his wife unaltered, waiting for him, when he comes home."

This was before the crushing verdict that ended the young clerk's trial, when Hannah was still earning her weekly pay, and Mrs. Williams had a sum of money yet in reserve for her own expenses.

Fortunately the old lady owned the little house in which she lived, her sole legacy from her dead husband; but as the weary months crept slowly along, poverty showed her ugly face in the humble home.

Hannah worked faithfully at her old post until Mrs. Williams was taken very ill. Sorrow and anxiety began to have physical as well as mental effect, and the mother bowed down, aged more in one year of separation from her son than she had ever been in ten of their loving companionship.

It was impossible to leave her alone, and the situation at the store was resigned. Nursing was no sinecure where the patient was so utterly helpless, for Mrs. Williams had had no use of her lower limbs for twelve years, the result of a long spell of inflammatory rheumatism. Nearer and nearer crept the gaunt wolf, poverty. Little articles of furniture that could be spared were sold; little comforts were denied; extra hours were given to the poorly paid sewing that replaced Hannah's store work, and yet actual hunger was staring them in the face.

Nearly two years had John Williams slept in a convict's cell, when one morning Hannah Coyle, leaving her self-imposed charge sleeping, went down to one of the fashionable hair-dresser's stores on Broadway. Poorly clad, pale and haggard, she waited for some time before the perfumed proprietor deigned to notice her.

"I have come to sell my hair," she said, very quietly, choking back her tears, and thinking, "It will grow out again before John comes home."

The proprietor led her to the hair-dressing room, and hid *his amazement at the superb profusion* under a hard, half-contemptuous smile.

"H'm—yes; rather coarse," he said, fingering the rich masses.

"I hoped it was worth considerable," Hannah said, ready to sink with shame.

It was no part of a bargain to allow a fair price for such a purchase, and when Hannah left the store only thirty dollars paid her for her closely cropped head. Yet thirty dollars would keep life a little longer in the feeble frame of John's mother, and Hannah was thankful for the greenbacks.

She was rapidly walking up Broadway, when she was attracted for a moment by a crowd before a drug store, and her feet seemed paralyzed as she heard a man say:

"I saw his face. It is Gerald Somers, son of old James Somers, firm of Howell and Somers."

"Is he much hurt?"

"Fatally, I should say. One of the horses put his foot on his breast."

"Gerald Somers! Fatally injured!"

Hannah never paused to contemplate possibilities. She forced her way through the crowd into the store, past the gentlemanly proprietor to the very door of the inner room where the young man lay waiting for death.

"You cannot go in. His physician has ordered every one out but his father."

"I must go in! It is a matter of life and death," she answered. "I must see him before he dies."

Something in that white, earnest face moved the heart of the druggist, and he opened the door.

Upon a low sofa, lightly covered with a sheet, lay the handsome, dissipated son of the merchant prince. Kneeling beside him, looking into the white, drawn face, was the hastily summoned father, and the physician stood at the head of the couch. They had thought consciousness dead in the still figure, when a clear voice spoke the dying man's name.

"Gerald Somers!"

He opened his eyes wildly, and the clear, sweet voice spoke again in words, of solemn import:

"As you hope for mercy in the next world, tell the truth of John Williams' innocence."

He gasped convulsively, while his father bent over him, and the physician looked inquiringly at the intruder.

"John Williams," the hoarse dying voice said, very feebly, "was innocent. I did give him the check, as he said. I wrote the signature."

"Gerald!" cried the father, "is this true?"

"It is true, as I hope for God's mercy."

There was a moment of awful silence. Then the old man turned to Hannah.

"Who are you?"

"John Williams' promised wife."

"Go. I will do him justice. Leave me with my son."

She bowed her head, and went softly from the presence of the dying, thanking God humbly that He had guided her steps that day.

James Somers kept his word. He was an upright man, and he sacrificed the name of the dead to right that of the living. He would not take John back, the sight of his face was too exquisitely painful, but he paid him his full salary for the time of his absence, and found him a lucrative situation.

It was the day of the home coming. Mrs. Williams, in her own chair, was smiling upon John as he caressed Hannah's cropped head. Very grave and pale his sunny face had become in his bitter trial, but a smile brightened it as he heard his mother say:

"It was for me, John, she sacrificed all her splendid hair. I can never tell you *all* she sacrificed for me; but that speaks for itself."

The smile grew roguish then, as, clasping Hannah in a close embrace, he asked:

"Do you think now, mother, I might do better?"

"Not if you could marry an empress."

She thinks so still, and John agrees with her, though he has been married four years, and Hannah's hair is as superb as ever.

* * *

—Virtue is a rock, from which rebound all the arrows shot against it.

THE FALLEN PINE.

BY EMMA ALICE BROWNE.

A voice from the fallen pine—
A cry like a soul in pain:
Woe for the glory that once was mine,
And the pride of a kinghood slain!
And oh, for my branches tall!
For the vigor of youth and strength,
To riot in fibre and vein through all
My rugged and glorious length!

No more in my blasted boughs
Shall the gales of the Summer play,
And never again my withered brows
Shall shine with the gold of Day!
No more in my rocking peak
Shall the eyried eagles scream,
When I hear the swooping tempest shriek
Far off, in a spectral dream!

I sigh to the winds for aye,
I cry to the wandering stars,
To snap the bonds of my slow decay,
And open my prison bars.
But the eerie stars sail on,
The blast sweeps by with a moan;
I lie with the wrecks of a grandeur gone,
And the shadows of dreams, alone!

Yonder the ponderous plinth,
Hoary and storm-worn, stands
Where, wrought like a column of old Corinth,
By the Centuries' mighty hands,
My kingly shaft upreared,
Whose branching greenness soared
High over the wild cliffs, thunder seared,
Where the spouting cataract poured.

Aloft on a beetling crest
That glimmered in ether afar,
I cradled the winds on my savage breast
That kindled the Evening Star.
My feet in the heave and surge
Where the bow of the mist is born,
My dark plumes streamed o'er the shuddering verge
Like a banner against the morn.

When the heavens were black with a frown,
And the great oaks wrestled and bowed,
I grappled and dragged the red bolt down
From his eyrie in the cloud!
Or I scattered my spices bland
On the odorous dawn afar,
To the song of the sibilant winds that fanned
The flame of the Morning Star.

Woe for the fallen glory—
For the kingly head laid low—
For the rapture and strife that are but a story
Told of the Long Ago,
When Cloud and Crag and Cataract,
And the giant pines of yore
Chanted the pean of Nature
With a wild triumphal roar!

THE RIVAL SISTERS.

By ELIZA A. DUPUY,

AUTHOR OF THE "EVIL GENIUS," THE "WHITE TERROR," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXIX.

HESTER'S FORTUNE.

When Herbert Spencer came in, he took Hester's hand in both his own, and said:

"We are told that it is more blessed to give than to receive, Estelle, but I do not find it so in this instance. I shall owe you the happiness of my life, and I will not prove ungrateful. I have settled my future position with Mr. Snell, and he has shown me the books of the firm. It does a great business, and in a few years I shall, with ordinary good fortune, be a rich man. For two years, two-thirds of my share in the profits will go to you and Ray, to repay you the advances you will make for me, and the remaining third will be an ample income on which to marry. I feel as buoyant as a lark on the wing, and if I could, I would pour forth as jubilant a song."

"I am so glad, Herbert, and so happy to be able to help you on in any way. I have such keen sympathy with your joy, that I would not throw a damper over it for any consideration. But you are not to take Marion from me before the time agreed on, remember. I could not get on without her at Le Bocage till—till Raymond comes."

This sobered Spencer a little, and he rather ruefully said:

"See what it is to be bound by a promise. I was dreaming of taking Marion to myself as soon as possible. I can't say that I am afraid of Aunt Carrie now, but I would rather save my future wife from an encounter with her, if it could be done. Couldn't you consent to come back here in November, and spend the winter with us? Think of it, Estelle, dear, for it will be a very agreeable arrangement for me. I have bought out Mr. Balfour's interest in the firm, and I can also secure his house, which is a very pretty place in one of the upper fauxbourgs, with plenty of shade and flowers about it. I've been to see the house, and it will be a cozy nest for 'wedded love's first home.'"

"Upon my word, I must say that you have not let the grass grow beneath your feet," was the smiling reply. "I will think of what you have said, and let you know my decision after we get to Le Bocage. As to Marion, of course she will be obedient, and do what we tell her."

Mrs. Oliver glanced with love-lit eyes at the glowing face of the man she thought the most noble and generous of his sex, to be so ready to forgive her, and take her to his heart again; and with a blush on her cheek and a tear in her eye, she softly said:

"I have no right to refuse anything Herbert asks of me. It shall be the joy of my life to render him happy in his own way, and at his own time."

"Spoken like the leal and true woman I have always known you to be, Marion, my Marion;" and Spencer drew her to his heart and kissed her, for the moment oblivious of the presence of a third person.

"The poet tells us of the '*sober* certainty of waking bliss,' Herbert, but I fancy yours is intoxication rather," said Hester, almost sadly, as she contrasted this genuine love with that which she would steal from its lawful possessor when Raymond came, glowing with rapture, to claim his bride, and a faint feeling of compunction came over her heart.

Spencer saw the shadow that flitted over her face; he remembered the errand which had brought them to New Orleans, and blamed himself for exhibiting such exultation, when so painful a duty lay before them yet unfulfilled. He drew near the sofa on which Hester had seated herself, and quietly said:

"Pardon me, Estelle; happiness like mine is so egotistical that it is apt to forget the sorrows of others. Let me tell you now what I have done in your service, as a poor offset for what you have done for me."

"Do not speak of the last, Herbert, or we shall quarrel. As yet I have been able to do nothing really; but I shall redeem all the promises I have made, as soon as I am in possession of my property. I am of age according to the laws of this state, for I am eighteen years old, and I can act for myself. But that is not what I wish to speak of. Have you been able to think of—of Miss Blake's interests? That is a sacred duty delegated to me in my father's last hours, and I must attend to it before I leave this city."

"I knew how anxious you are about that, and of course I found time to see your father's lawyer, and employ him to draw up the papers that are necessary. I also went to the bank and ascertained that the money is lying there, with an order to transfer it to Hester Blake, in case any accident should happen to Mr. Landry. He seems to have forgotten that he left such an order, or he would not have been so anxious about that poor girl's fate, as his last letter seemed to indicate."

"Very likely it was so; for he suffered so much—so much in mind and body. That money can be sent then at once? It will be a load off my mind when it is given, and those to whom it will go need it, I fancy. They had nothing to live on, but an allowance from my father. You may think it foolish in me, Herbert, but I have the greatest wish to double or treble that petty fifteen thousand dollars. It seems so little to give to—to one who stands in the relation to me that this poor girl does. Why should Clarice and I have so much, and she so mere a pittance?"

"My dear Estelle," said Spencer earnestly, "I admire your generosity, and understand your untutored sense of justice; but in this case it will be best to fulfill your father's wishes, and do no more. It is true, that you will have great wealth at your command, but you will also have many claims upon you, and what Mr. Landry thought sufficient for Miss Blake, you may be sure will be found so. She has not been reared with your ideas, and therefore this money, which to you seems so little, will by her be regarded as a fortune. She has lived where not many girls have as handsome a dower, I can tell you."

"All that may be very true, but I feel as if it is incumbent on me to do something myself. I can never forget the kindness of those people to me, and I must return it in some substantial way. There is no one to control me, and I insist on giving Mrs. Blake and her daughter enough to enable them to reside in Europe. The girl is very handsome, and she may make a brilliant marriage there. Was there not other money belonging to the estate deposited in the bank?"

"Yes; the proceeds from last year's crop, amounting to over a hundred thousand dollars. The half of that is yours to do as you choose with."

"Since that is the case, have Miss Blake's settlement increased to thirty thousand dollars; that is the least I can offer my half-sister. The addition is my gift to her, and I am sure she will not refuse it."

"My dear Estelle, I honor you for this liberality, misplaced as I believe it to be, therefore I will say no more against it. I will instruct the lawyer to increase the amount of Miss Blake's fortune; but before the papers are signed, I will bring him hither to talk with you himself. His arguments may have more weight than mine."

"I shall not listen to them," said Hester almost imperiously. "I have settled what is to be done. I believe it to be right, and that is sufficient for me. That young girl is my father's daughter, and she must be suitably provided for. I think it a small thing to give her less than one year's income of my own, as her whole fortune. Bring me such papers yourself as require my signature, and spare me any remonstrances from the lawyer, who would protect my interests at the expense of justice."

Herbert raised her hand to his lips, and said:

"An open hand and a generous heart are yours, Estelle, and He who gave them to you will reward you for so nobly using the gifts he has bestowed on you. You shall have your own will, without any interference that I can prevent."

She smiled brightly, and rising from her seat, said:

"I have here an appeal for assistance which I must no longer neglect. Marion will explain to you what it is, and how it came to my hands."

When Hester reached her own room, she eagerly tore open the letter, at which she had merely glanced, before she had found it necessary to allay Mrs. Oliver's rising suspicions by concocting the story she had told her.

She first read what had been written by her mother, and Hester was glad to find that Mrs. Blake was more composed in mind, and capable of giving a detailed account of all that had occurred at Elm Cottage since her own departure.

There was much to fill the reader with indignation and alarm, for Mrs. Muller seemed to her a very doubtful ally, and the sum she was disposed to exact of her she thought extortionate. There was nothing, however, but to submit, as they were all in the woman's power.

Hester paced the floor in a tumult of agitation and anger at this unexpected turn of events, and Macon's letter lay neglected upon the table till her eye accidentally fell on it in her hurried walk. With curling lip she took it up, muttering:

"I suppose I must read the sickening love twaddle, though I loathe it and its writer. Perhaps when he has exhausted that, he will tell me what I had best do with reference to this new vampyre. At this rate, my fortune will be held more for the benefit of others than for my own."

Macon's was a genuine love-letter, and if the reader had felt one spark of affection for him, she would have been touched with the passionate outpouring of feeling of which she had been the inspiration. As it was, she only felt the bitterest scorn and contempt for the man who could give so much, in return for so little.

In a postscript he spoke curtly enough of Mrs. Muller, and advised her to send the five hundred dollars demanded down, and settle on her an annuity, to be paid in semi-annual instalments. Only thus could she guard herself from future extortion on the part of that rapacious individual.

Hester had designed the greater part of the large sum she had arranged with Spencer to transfer to Mrs. Blake's daughter, as a bribe to Macon to allow her to walk upon her path without interference from him that must now prove fatal to them all. She knew him to be fond of money, and she tried to flatter herself that when he learned the secret marriage of Estelle Landry, and understood the necessity of sacrificing his own hopes to insure her safety, he would prove how genuine was his affection for her, by not only giving her up to his rival, but by removing for ever from her path the hapless being whose fortune and husband she intended to appropriate.

But even while Hester tried to cheat herself into this belief, she *knew* that a desperate struggle between herself and Macon had yet to be made, and which would come off conqueror she could hardly yet foresee.

With pale set face, she muttered:

"If it comes to the worst, let him beware. I will neither give myself to him, nor yield the wealth he was so willing to help me to grasp. If he would betray me, his future will be sacrificed as much as mine; but if he threatens *that*, I will deal with him as ruthlessly as he will merit."

Hester at last composed herself sufficiently to sit down and write a few lines in reply to her mother, informing her that the sum of thirty thousand dollars would be transferred to New York as soon as possible, for her use. From that a sufficient amount must be taken to secure the annuity of Mrs. Muller, and the remainder was to be divided equally between Macon and herself. She gave no reason as yet for offering him this bribe. She would not betray her actual position so long as it was possible to withhold it, for to both her mother and lover it would be an awful shock to learn that she must become the wife of Raymond De Lorme as soon as he returned from Europe to claim her, or go down to the depths of infamy and poverty. How she would soften the blow to them, she left for future consideration, and she would not doubt that both must see the force of her reasonings, and yield to the inevitable.

When this was done, Hester forced herself to reply to Macon's tender effusions in such a strain as would not enlighten him as to the treachery she was meditating against him. The letter was brief, but it was very sweet and tender; and when it reached him, Macon had the opportunity to compare its carefully turned sentences with the later one yet to be written, which, by some irregularity in the mails, reached him on the same day.

The next morning a check for five hundred dollars was brought to her by Spencer, in the belief that this munificent sum was designed as a present to the fictitious Mrs. Caroline Linley, to whom her letter was addressed. He thought her extravagant in relieving the necessities of her friends, but after her liberality toward himself, Herbert felt as if he had no right to remonstrate. He mailed the letter, thinking Hester one of God's ministering angels; never dreaming that a woman who was fast becoming a demon had assumed that angelic guise only that she might effect her own dark purposes.

Mr. Landry's affairs were found to be in perfect order. The lawyer, who also acted as agent for the two large sugar plantations belonging to the estate, insisted on having an interview with Hester, and he explained to her that as she was of age, she could claim her own share of the inheritance, and allow a tutor or guardian to be appointed for her young sister to manage hers to the best advantage.

Hester begged Mr. Casey to make all the necessary arrangements for the accomplishment of both objects, and asked that Raymond De Lorme should be the guardian chosen for Clarice. She wished Casey to retain the agency which he had hitherto managed so well, and expressed the hope that he would continue to be as good a friend to her as he had proved to her father.

The lawyer was an impressible man, and he left Hester enchanted with her grace and affability, as were all others who approached her. A few of her father's old friends called to see her, but it was so many years since the genuine Estelle Landry had been taken north to live with her aunt, that not one among them could unmask the impostor who had assumed her name and identity. That the young stranger strikingly resembled the Landry family was evident enough, and as there was no cause for suspicion, none was excited.

Hester thought with extreme satisfaction of Spencer's proposal to marry Marion in November, and remove her to New Orleans. She would thus be rid of a most dangerous spy upon her actions, for she knew that with Mrs. Oliver's keen observation and silent analysis of character, she must soon discover that she was not the immaculate embodiment of goodness she had striven so sedulously to impose upon her.

Hester was beginning to feel the restraint of her presence wearisome, yet she would make a merit of giving up her companion at an early day, promising at the same time to join the newly wedded pair in New Orleans. After a few weeks' stay with them, she could find some excuse for returning to Le Bocage, where she could reign undisputed mistress of herself and her surroundings, unconscious that among the very slaves she came to rule over, her most dangerous foes were to be encountered.

On the third morning after their arrival in New Orleans, our party embarked on the packet, and after a pleasant day spent chiefly on the guards of the boat, they were landed at sunset at Le Bocage.

The house, with its pillared galleries extending entirely around it, gleamed white and stately through the majestic water oaks that shaded the lawn, and Hester's heart beat high with triumph as she thought that this magnificent place, with all its sable dependents, was hers; for she had made up her mind that, as the eldest daughter, she would claim this plantation as her portion of her father's estate, leaving the lower place, which was quite as valuable, as the property of Clarice.

CHAPTER XXX.

HESTER'S TROUBLES BEGINNING.

As the boat came up to the landing, a dark group collected on the levee to welcome the new mistress. They were the house servants, and among them was a middle-aged woman with black and shining skin, and keen observant eyes, who seemed moved by some deep emotion, while the others only looked on curiously, wondering, perhaps, whether the new arrival would bring to them good or evil in the future.

The tall negress was a striking looking object, in her bright colored dress, her handkerchief turban striped with crimson and black, and her large gold earrings. She carried a small basket filled with keys on her arm, the insignia of her office as housekeeper at Le Bocage.

At a glance Hester recognized her as the daughter of old Zelma, the woman who had betrayed, on her death-bed, her own agency in destroying her master's wife. As her eyes fell on Zulieme, a thrill of repulsion arose in the heart of the new-comer, for this woman had been a thorn in her mother's side in those days in which Mrs. Blake had held rule over the house, in the absence of its master, and Hester remembered many acts of impertinence and insubordination of which Zulieme had been guilty. She was amazed to find her in a position of authority, and determined in her own mind that she would soon put her down on a level with the other servants, and place another in the position she now held.

But for the present it was Hester's policy to conciliate, and when the housekeeper approached her with a smiling face, she put out her hand, and cordially said:

"My good Zulieme, I am glad to see you again, and doubly glad to find myself at the old place once more. There are so few changes that I could almost fancy I had left it only yesterday."

"Bless your heart, honey, I'm mighty glad to hear you say you like your own home after bein' 'way from it so long. I hardly thought you'd know me agin, Miss Estelle, for you was but a little thing when the marster took you away to live long of yer aunt. An', O Lor'! jest to think! he'll never come back no more—no more!"

Herbert made a hasty motion with his hand, and the speaker stepped back. With some sternness, he said:

"Your young mistress has had enough to bear, without being condoled with in this fashion, my good woman. You meant kindly no doubt, but your words are ill-judged. Let us pass on to the house."

He led Hester forward, followed by Mrs. Oliver, in charge of a young planter living near Le Bocage, who had formerly been well known to her. At the gate they encountered the overseer, a middle-aged rustic looking man, and with him was the parish priest, who had been written to by Spencer to have everything in readiness for the reception of Mr. Landry's mortal remains. A chapel, mainly sustained by the liberality of the deceased, was on the lower part of the plantation, and thither arrangements had been made to convey the body when it landed. There masses were to be said throughout the night, and on the following day the funeral was to take place.

Father Francis was presented to Hester, and after a few consoling words, he went back with Spencer and the overseer, to join the little procession which escorted the remains of Mr. Landry to the church. They left the two ladies, with young Victor Malone, at the gate, Spencer merely saying, by way of apology:

"You are at home now, Estelle, and know the way to the house. I have so many other things to attend to, that I must leave you here."

"Do not think of us, Herbert. I am at home, as you say, and Mr. Malone will accompany us. You see that I have also an escort of sable retainers waiting for a word or smile from my lips. I must show them what a tenacious memory I have, though I was but seven years old when I was taken away from the plantation."

"Don't try to make yourself popular by pretending to remember more than you do, Estelle," said Herbert; "negroes are keen detectives sometimes, and they have no respect for shams of any kind."

As Spencer spoke the words which to him meant so little, to her so much, he turned away and strode after the priest and overseer. Hester changed color, but she regained composure as she thought:

"It was a timely warning, and one I shall profit by. It was not strange that Estelle Landry should have remembered Zulieme, for she has been in the house from her infancy, but the others I must be careful about; a child of eight would not be likely to retain any recollection of the servants that were not about her person. Zulieme was my sister's nurse, and of course she should be an exception. I was not imprudent in speaking to *her* as I did."

She gave a slight glance backward, and saw Zulieme moving forward with stately steps, followed by the other servants, to whom Hester had only bowed and smiled faintly as she passed them. She bit her lip as she remarked the proud bearing of the negress, and thought:

"Old Zelma used to boast that she was a princess in her own country, and I am sure her daughter bears herself as if she were a queen. Well, she is but my slave after all, and I will soon find means to humble her to her proper level. I will pay her back now for all her former insolence to my mother."

As these thoughts passed through her mind, the party slowly sauntered up the gravelled walk leading to the house. The lawn, like the levee, was covered with Bermuda grass, green, thick and soft as a carpet, and over it a dozen water oaks cast their giant arms—trees more majestic and more beautiful than any others to be found in any portion of our land, save California. They were set very far apart, but their branches met and mingled in fantastic embraces, making a canopy of shade in that sunny land. A hedge of orange-trees surrounded the whole inclosure, but the green expanse within was unbroken by a single flower-bed.

One wing of the house was a large conservatory, and in the rear of that was a garden filled with such shrubs as would flourish in the open air.

A scarlet Virginia creeper was planted near the long gallery, and permitted to twine its parasitic tendrils around the fluted pillars that supported its roof. A flight of marble steps led to the floor above, and when they had ascended them, Hester turned to Mrs. Oliver and gracefully welcomed her to her new home.

Marion kissed her, and said:

"Thank you, dear Estelle. This is a sad coming home to you; but I trust that we shall be happy here together. I will do my best to brighten your life, and make you forget the loss you have sustained."

"It is sad to find an empty house, when I had expected to come hither with him that is gone, and wake the echoes of the old home to such gladness as it has not known for years. But God's will be done. I must try and submit to the decree that made me fatherless."

The voice faltered, and Marion felt the keenest sympathy for the grief she believed the consummate actress to be feeling. She pressed her hand tenderly, and the three entered the wide hall, the floor of which was stained almost to the hue of mahogany, and waxed till it shone as if newly varnished. A narrow strip of Brussels carpet was laid in the centre, and in front of the sofas with which it was furnished, Persian rugs were placed. A few good pictures and many family portraits adorned the walls; in a recess formed on either side of the back door were marble copies of Canova's flower girls. The roof was high and arched, and from the centre sprang a dome filled with ground glass, through which the light filtered on the works of art below. The parlors and family apartments were on this floor, but below them was the dining-room, the master's office, and a billiard room, with one for smoking opening from it.

Every portion of the house was familiar to Hester, and she led the way into a suit of apartments opening from each other, fitted up in a most tasteful and luxurious style. The mansion had been thoroughly repaired and refurnished for the reception of Mr. Landry and his daughter, for it had been his intention to bring Estelle home this autumn and install her as mistress there.

The folding doors were open, and Hester glanced down the long vista ending with the glass partition of the conservatory, and her heart beat high with triumph, as she thought:

"All this was worth a struggle; and I—*I* have as much right to its enjoyment as that other child whose birthright I have appropriated."

"These are beautiful rooms," said Mrs. Oliver, "and everything is in perfect taste. Ah! it was hard that your father—" She stopped abruptly, and then softly added:

"Pardon me, Estelle; I was thoughtless. I would not add a pang to those you must naturally feel, when you look around and see how much has been done for your pleasure by him who can no longer enjoy it with you."

Hester bent her head upon her friend's shoulder, not to conceal her tears, but to vail the exultation that filled her heart at the thought that all this was her own, won by her own craft, and she felt strong to battle with fate itself, sooner than surrender her prize.

Victor Malone felt as if he was *de trop*, and he said to Mrs. Oliver:

"I will take my leave now; and as I pass Oaklands on my way home, I will stop and let Mrs. De Lorme know that Miss Landry has arrived."

"Thank you; that will be best perhaps."

Hester raised her head, but she suffered her thick vail to fall over her face, and in gentle tones, said:

"I shall be much obliged to you, Mr. Malone, if you will call and see Mrs. De Lorme. We shall see you to-morrow of course, and afterward, when my house is open to company, I, or rather we, will be happy to welcome you as a guest at Le Bocage."

The young man bowed low, and replied:

"I shall feel honored in being numbered among your friends, Miss Landry, and I beg that if you need my services in any way after Mr. Spencer leaves, you will call on me as freely as if I were your brother. We were playmates in early childhood, you know, and that gives you a claim on me."

Hester expressed her thanks, and the young man left, charmed by her grace and sweetness of manner.

As he rode away on the horse his own servant had brought for him, Zulieme appeared at the door and signified her readiness to conduct the two ladies to the apartments that had been prepared for them.

They crossed the hall and entered a lateral one communicating with it, on which opened the large airy rooms used as sleeping chambers. The two appropriated to the young mistress and her guest had a dressing-room between them, which was used in common, and the same luxurious taste pervaded them which was found in every other portion of the mansion.

The day was so warm as to be almost oppressive, and Marion was glad to lay aside her bonnet and throw herself on a wide sofa which was placed between two of the windows that commanded a view of the river.

Zulieme followed her mistress into her own apartment, and after closing the door of communication between that and the dressing-room, she approached Hester, knelt down before her and kissed her feet, the hem of her garments, and gradually lifting her turbaned head, pressed her lips to her hand, crying out at intervals:

"O, my darling! my picaninny that I nursed with my own baby, how glad I am to see you once again! to feel the soft flesh I used to think so sweet and dainty! Oh, Miss Estelle, may I take you in my arms as I did when you was a little thing, and kiss your cheeks and lips once more? I has done it a thousand times afore this; and when they took you from me, you couldn't ha' took on more if you had bin my own chile."

Hester shrank from these demonstrations, coming from this woman against whom she cherished a deep-seated grudge, and she almost hated her for the devotion to her sister which her words and actions expressed. She coldly drew herself away from the caressing hands, and said:

"All that was long ago, Zulieme, and I cannot all at once take up the past as you seem to expect. Of late years I have not been accustomed to have black people about me, and I must get used to seeing them, before I can reconcile myself to being embraced and kissed even by you. I was such a mere baby when I was taken away from Le Bocage, that you cannot expect me to remember much that happened before I left. I do not wish to hurt your feelings, but really such demonstrations had better be let alone. Help me take off my things, if you please, and then see that a bath is prepared for both Mrs. Oliver and myself."

Long before she ceased speaking, the woman had sprung to her feet and stood glaring on her with panting breath and half-closed lips. A faint, suppressed moan was heard, and she said, in a choking voice:

"So this is what the Yankees has done for you, and for *me*: they've made you afeard of your own people—of the nuss that tuk you to her buzzum when your own ma died, and left you a poor dwining baby that would ha' died too, if I hadn't been by you night and day, day and night, a workin' with you as I never did with my own boy. Oh, Miss Estelle, it cuts me to the heart to hear sich words from your sweet lips, as they spoke jest now. Don't—don't forgit what I've done for you, honey, for I never can."

Hester was not touched by this appeal. In the voice of the speaker there was a ring of passionate anger, as well as of wounded affection, and the repulsion she felt toward her was deepened by the claim on her Zulieme believed she possessed. Her own voice was hard and cold, as she said:

"I am not likely to forget anything that it is necessary to remember. I dare say you were good to me in my infancy, but it was your duty to be so, for my father would not have tolerated any other course toward his child. You have been well rewarded for your fidelity, I think, for you have been left for years in charge of the house, with no one to control you in any way. Now that I am here, I intend to be the ruling spirit myself, but you will still continue to act under my directions; that is, as long as you do not assume too much on the strength of your former relations to myself."

Zulieme regarded her with dilating eyes, and she said, as if speaking to herself:

"Is this the chile what was tore from my arms screaming for her mammy? When I hear her talk this way, I could almost believe that the *ebissary* have took *my* darling, and put another in her place. I could, though *that* couldn't be no how."

Hester crimsoned with anger, and a sudden dread arose in her heart that perhaps this woman, through the clairvoyance of affection, might have suspicions aroused in her mind that would be detrimental to herself. She repressed the angry words that arose to her lips, and turning to Zulieme, forced herself to take her hand, and say:

"I shall get used to you again, mammy, and be as fond of you as I was in my baby days; but you must give me time. Everything here seems so strange to me after my long absence. I can't bear to hear you say that I might be a changeling—but that you know is all nonsense. It is true that Aunt Murray tried to make a Northerner of me, but you will soon find that I have a true Southern heart, and I mean to do the best I can by those dependent upon me."

The woman sighed heavily, and despondently said:

"I hope you will, Miss Estelle; you wouldn't be your father's daughter if you didn't—but I see that *I've* lost my darling. I was your mammy once, but now you've made me feel that I am only your slave. I'll serve you the best I can, but the heart's all gone out of it. I've watched and waited so long for you to come; and now you're here, you're nothing to me but my *mistress*. Well—God is good, and he'll help me to bear even that."

"Why, what would you have?" asked Hester petulantly. "I am a young lady now, and you cannot expect me to be hanging around you, and acting toward you as if I were still a baby. You know, if I did so, the other servants would soon become bitterly jealous of you."

In a stolid tone, the woman said:

"I don't expect nothing, Miss Estelle. I has done expecting now. I'll go now and do what you told me, and I had better send in my niece, little Zelma, to wait on you. She is to be your maid. I followed your father's orders, and trained her as well as I could for the place."

"Old Zelma's grandchild! Did my father really select her for my personal attendant?" asked Hester, in some surprise.

"He tole me hisself that she was to wait on you. She's quick and active, and Mr. Landry knowed that we was all faithful to them that is good to us. He seemed to hesitate a little afore he fixed on her for your maid, but she was the spryest of all the young darkies, and he at last chose her out 'n the lot."

"Very well; send her in then, and you can attend to your housekeeping," said Hester, very well satisfied that the descendant of one who had proved her devotion to her mother was to occupy the place of maid to herself.

Zulieme left the room with slow and lingering steps, and as she turned to close the door, she cast a searching and dissatisfied glance at the face of her supposed nurseling. Hester caught the expression with which she regarded her, and it made her feel both uncomfortable and resentful. Much as she hated Zulieme, she felt that it would be both dangerous and impolitic to show no consideration for the woman who evidently expected so much from her. She was shrewd, observant, and had for years occupied a position of trust in the family, and Hester bitterly acknowledged to herself that any attempt on her part to humiliate Zulieme might lead to her own overthrow. So she made up her mind to vail her dislike, and tolerate her near her person, since it was the safest course to pursue.

She had scarcely arrived at this conclusion, when a light tap came to her door, and a young negro girl, neatly dressed, came in, with wide eyes and smiling mouth. She made a fantastic little courtesy, and said:

"I is Zelma, Miss Estelle, and I's come to show you what a nice lady's maid I is. I kin comb yer hair 'ithout pullin' it, an' I kin fix on yer close as nice as the best on 'em. Madam Lorme let her French gal give me some lessons, when she heerd you'd be home this fall."

Hester had thrown herself on a lounge, but she raised herself, and surveyed her new attendant with some interest. The girl was evidently too young and too unsuspicious to become a spy upon her, and she graciously said:

"I like your looks, Zelma, and I think we shall get on very well together. Open my trunk and get my dressing-gown; I will test your skill in combing hair at once. A great writer who lived once, thought the ideal of happiness was lying on a sofa and reading. Mine is, to lounge in a comfortable chair, with a book, at which I may or may not look, with deft fingers manipulating my head-piece."

"Oh! I sha'n't *nip* you, Miss Estelle, you'm sure o' dat. I knows what I's 'bout too well. Here's a rockin'-*cheer* wi' a low back, an' I kin git at yer har nice ef you'll set down on it."

Hester sat down, and the girl commenced her duties, chattering at intervals, and flattering her new mistress without stint.

"Yer har is lovely, Miss Estelle, and it's mighty thick an' shinin'. You's as han'some as a picter, you is, an' I's proud to be yer waitin' maid. I was mortal feard marster'd take Sylva, ole Gumbo's darter, but she'd make two o' me, and he knowed she'd go trampin' round like—like—well, like a hipplepotmus, as I heerd him call her myself. What is a hipplepotmus now, Miss Estelle, for I dun no?"

"A hippopotamus, which I suppose you mean, is an amphibious animal, very clumsy in its movements, and not pleasant to look at. If Sylvia resembled one, I am glad that my father chose you in preference."

"Well, now, Sylvia does tell *fibs*, that's a fact, and she's as clumsy as a cow; but she an't so bad to look at, for she's got a good-natured face. I kin 'ford to say dat, Miss Estelle, when *I* got de place I wanted, in spite of her old daddy and his grumblin'."

"Why, what could he say? What did he dare to say?" asked Hester, with sudden interest.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

—Were children accustomed from infancy to hear nothing but correct conversation, there would be but little need of their learning arbitrary rules of grammar—they would naturally speak and write correctly. Hence it is that children of educated parents are generally so much more easy and graceful in their conversation than the children of the uneducated. Our language, like our manners, is caught from those with whom we associate.

WITH CARE.

BY ETHEL LYNN.

The sculptor's thought, to marble grown,
Perfect as shapely thought might be,
Laid swathed in wrappings folded close,
"With care" to cross the land and sea.

Warm with the fair Italian sun,
They laid the dim white dream away;
Around it pressed the golden straw
That nodded, growing, yesterday.

The while some seeds of Southern blooms,
By no one picked with tender hands—
At least no man, the Lord of all
Its passport gave to foreign lands—

Were nestled there in Tuscan straw,
Each robing folded from the air.
So germs as well as marble went,
Beneath the painted mark, "With care."

Safe to the far-off Northern port,
Safe to the waiting Northern town,
True hands the statue safely bore,
And all unblemished laid it down.

Safely they reared the wondrous shaft
Where palace columns rising gleam,
And men became idolaters
Before Thorwaldsen's "frozen dream."

Meanwhile, just where the Northern air
Saluted first the Southern stone,
And Tuscan straw had lain a while,
There sprung to light a flower unknown;

So wondrous fair, so vaguely sweet,
One could not choose to pass it by,
That gay, fair foreigner, that came
Where all was strange except the sky.

And now, from peasant's humble door
To palace gardens, everywhere
That sunny bloom broadcast is seen
That came unwittingly "with care."

And so, I think, when great events
March grandly on, we creatures small
May comfort take, remembering,
"With care" is written over all.

AN ASTONISHED JOCKEY.

A HUMOROUS SKETCH.

BY SYLVANUS COBB, JR.

We relate the following, not as a very taking story, but for the fun of the thing. If the reader could have known Jerry Wipper as we knew him, he would appreciate the fun most keenly. And some of our readers did know him,—aye, they know him now,—for Jerry still lives, notwithstanding the terrible discomfiture of which we are about to tell.

Know that our far-away country village had grown to be a place of note. The Grand Trunk Railroad, opening up the country from Kittery Point to Quoddy Head, not only ran through our place, but diverging lines of stage routes, connecting with the railroad, centred there. So, in fact, the village which had aforetime been of small account became the most important rural centre outside of Kittery. Pepper's Hill kept the Court-house and the Jail, but our place took the summer travel, and in time became the seat of the Agricultural Fair grounds of the county. The opening of the Fair grounds gave us a Trotting Track, and the Trotting Track awoke a spirit of emulation and rivalry touching fast horses.

Jerry Wipper was our village Jehu and stable-keeper; and if you could have witnessed a horse trade between him and old Shaker Wentworth, you would have seen "diamond cut diamond." In fact, old Wentworth has often declared that Jerry Wipper was the only man living who could squarely beat him in a horse trade. Of course Jerry very soon became the leading spirit of the track; and he was its acknowledged master, too; and we are sorry to say that he did not scruple to adopt any manner of plotting or hedging which might sustain his supremacy. He was more than half horse himself, though it was the opinion of many thinking men that in the matter of moral perception the average horse was his superior. Of conscience Jerry possessed not a bit; but he was sensitive, and could be a jolly good fellow in his way.

For several years Jerry Wipper managed to keep himself at the top of the heap, and at all the races he came out ahead in the betting. Those who were inside the ring knew that his luck was not of the strictly honest kind; but as they were sure to be the bitten ones their complaints and denunciations had little weight. Jerry never came boldly in at the outset, to enter his horse against all comers; but he hung upon the outskirts until others had entered, and when he had duly examined and considered the possibilities of the opposition, he would enter, or not, as prudence dictated. So it came about that Jerry became a disorganizer. A fair, square race, with Jerry Wipper in the ring, became among the impossibilities.

On one occasion, at an advertised race connected with the Fair, Dave Powell entered a fine mare which he had himself raised, and which was fast for that region. When the horses were called for the start Jerry Wipper appeared with one of his speedy plugs. Objection was made that Jerry had not duly entered his horse, whereupon Jerry made answer that the horse was not his. John Johnson had bought him, and John Johnson had entered him, and John Johnson had hired him—Jerry—to drive. Upon referring to the Society's book it was found that John Johnson had duly entered "brown gelding, no name," and had paid the fee. The honest ones shook their heads, but there was no help for it. Jerry had taken numerous bets upon Powell's mare, going two to one against her. His old "plug" was a trotter, and he took the Society's purse, and cleaned up all his bets.

Dave Powell shook his head, and said he would be even with Jerry if he lived. Dave was our expressman, and was a true man, every inch of him.

Time passed on, and another October was approaching, with another Fair, and other races. Jerry Wipper had given out that he should enter one of his own horses for the sweepstakes—*Umbagog*, he called the animal. When asked where the horse was, he replied that *Umbagog* was out to pasture,—and the twinkle of his eye told to those who saw it that there was mischief in the wind. Dave saw it, and resolved to watch.

One day, as Dave was coming up on the train, and as the cars stopped at Dandown Junction, he observed Jerry Wipper upon the station platform in close confab with an old sport of Androscoggin named Hobson. This Hobson owned a very fast horse—at that time deemed the fastest trotter in that section of the State—and Dave fancied he could detect the caudal appendage of a very big mice. On the next morning, as Dave came down in his express car, he got out at Dandown Junction and hailed his friend and chum, Bill Timpkins, and asked him to find out, if he could, what business Jerry Wipper and Old Hobson had together.

Fortune favored Dave. When he came back Bill had solved the mystery. Jerry had bought Hobson's trotting horse, *Ringtail Snorter*—had paid down fifty dollars to bind the bargain—had given his note for one month for the purchase, with the understanding that if the money was not paid at the expiration of that time the horse might be returned.

Dave saw the game. *Ringtail Snorter* was the horse Jerry had out to pasture, and which he proposed to enter as *Umbagog*. Dave shut his mouth, and took serious counsel with himself; and when he next visited Portland he took counsel with George Babcock. George listened, and his eye grew bright. He had felt Wipper's bite aforetime, and was open to business. Said he,—

"Dave, I think we've got just the thing. Last July Dan George sent down to me, from Boston, his grey gelding *Thunderbolt*, with sore feet. The doctors had told him that a season's run in a country pasture would effect a cure. The horse is now on my cousin's farm, in Harrison. He is twenty-two years old, and as sleepy a looking beast as you ever saw; but put him on the track, and let him feel the bit, and hear the tramp of a contending horse at his side, and he'll wake up like a streak of lightning. I'll go up to the farm to-morrow, and if I find the old fellow's feet all right, I'll sell him to you cheap; only—you shall sell him back to me after the race!"

Within a week from that time Dave Powell appeared upon the village highway with an old gray horse hitched to his light express wagon; and for the joke of the thing he entered the old gray for the sweepstakes at the coming races—entered him as "SLEEPY DAVID,"—and as the beast showed a very fair rate of speed on the road, people did not know but that Dave might be in earnest, after all.

The day of the race arrived, and the corns were laid on both sides. Jerry Wipper appeared with *Umbagog*, and a few at once recognized the famed *Ringtail Snorter* of old Hobson; but Jerry proved a bona-fide purchase, and there could be no objection to the entry. Two other horses, when the presence of the renowned *Snorter* was discovered, were withdrawn by their owners. So that, when the time for the start came, only *Umbagog* and *Sleepy David* put in an appearance.

Dave Powell was not a betting man himself, but on the present occasion he felt justified in urging others to bet. He whispered to his friends, whom he could trust, and bade them take every bet they could get from Wipper or his backers; and he pledged himself, if they lost, to make them whole. George Babcock had come up from Portland, and though he offered no bets on his own account, he encouraged Dave's friends to "go in."

Meantime Jerry Wipper had been busy in taking bets. He was big with confidence, and when he saw how easily the *flats* (!) were induced to stake their money he grew jubilant. He had seen the old gray plug go around the track, and though the gait was a rattling one—close upon three minutes—what did it matter to him who was sure of two-forty, with seconds to spare?

By the time the call for the start was made from the judge's stand it had been whispered around pretty extensively that Wipper was to drive Old Hobson's *Ringtail Snorter*, and the interest was intense. Touching *Sleepy David* there was not a suspicion. Dave had driven him to his express wagon for a week, and not a thought had obtained that the aged beast was other than a stout old roadster which the expressman had picked up in his travels, and for which he had paid but little.

In the toss for positions Jerry won, and he took the pole.—The horses scored fairly, and got the word "*Go!*"

And away they went. The *Snorter*—for by this time everybody knew the horse—led off at a beautiful pace, at a fair, swinging trot, seeming to have everything his own way. And yet *Sleepy David* held his position close upon Wipper's sulky wheel. The ground was slightly descending toward the back stretch, and as the two horses came around the lower turn upon the up grade a change came over the scene. The old gray plug spread himself,—he lay down to his work in a manner truly surprising,—he literally flew, if that can be called flying which seems at the same time to be running into the very ground, so close and low is the cling.

"*Hi-yah!*" shouted Dave, with a yell that might have been heard a mile.

The *Snorter* heard the thunder of the coming bolt, and when he saw the gray streak shooting past him, he lost his feet, and went into the air. Jerry pulled and jerked—he hallooed and coaxed, and then he applied the whip,—but it was of no use. The old gray horse came in ahead,—time, two minutes and fifty-two seconds.

Jerry was provoked, but not disheartened. His horse had behaved badly. The first two-thirds of the heat had not been pressed, and he had not kept his horse properly in hand. He would show them who could win the next heat.

And ere long the next heat was called, with *Sleepy David* at the pole. Three scores, and they were sent off. Mercy! what a fall for Jerry Wipper! At the very start, now warmed to his work, and snuffing the full glory of battle, the old gray pelter struck his flying gait, leaping away like a locomotive at full blast, and with strides as steady as the strokes of a piston-rod. In the lurch—far, far in the lurch—was the renowned *Ringtail Snorter*. For a time Wipper yelled and struggled; but he soon saw that the fates were against him. *The tools were not in his hands!* While the *Snorter* was yet upon the back stretch, far short of the distance stake, with humbled, drooping head, *Sleepy David* came to the score, and his time was recorded.

Jerry Wipper rode up, and looked at the figures last made upon the board—"2:28"!—at least ten seconds faster than the *Snorter* had ever been known to trot.

Jerry descended from his sulky, and went around to look at the gray horse.

"Dave," said he, "where did you get that horse?"

"I bought him," said Dave.

"How'd you buy him?"

"Just about the same as you bought Old Hobson's *Ringtail Snorter!*"

At that moment a friend whispered into Jerry's ear,—"*That's Dan George's* THUNDERBOLT, *as true as you're born!*"

Jerry looked up, and saw the twinkle in Dave's eye.

"Dave," said he, "you've sold me."

"No," said Dave. "I've only paid you back what I honestly owed you."

Jerry was forced to make a show of trotting the third heat; but it was dreary work. He got mad, and whipped the *Snorter* into a keen run—running almost the whole mile like mad,—and yet the old grey came in ahead—time 2:27!

It was a jolly race—a race long to be remembered. Those who had bet on Wipper's horse cursed their luck, and they might have cursed Wipper himself had they not, in a measure, been parties to his intended fraud, and had they not known that of all who had lost, none had lost so heavily as had the astonished Jockey himself.

* * *

Pride of Opinion.—An Italian nobleman is said to have fought sixteen duels upon the question, "Which was the better poet, Ariosto or Tasso?" and being mortally wounded in his sixteenth, with his dying words, confessed that he never had read either. How many opinions do we perversely cling to, which have in reality no more reasonable grounds than the poor Italian's notions upon Ariosto and Tasso!

COOLING FOR BLIFKINS.

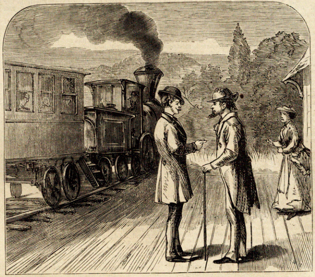
Young Blifkins, son of old Blifkins the banker—he of the Dolly Varden pants and vest,—was recently caught in a shower, and took refuge under the portico of a dwelling on Beacon street. A very attractive young lady—a pretty maiden—who sat by the open window, seeing his situation, sent out a servant to him with an umbrella. Blifkins went away in ecstasy; and on the following day, having attired himself in most elaborate and stunning array of starch and jewels, he took the umbrella, which was an old one, and laid it away with his treasures of conquest as a souvenir; and then he went forth and purchased an affair to replace it of the most beautiful and costly kind. Thus equipped, he called upon the lady to return her flattering loan. She admitted him to her presence, and received the umbrella without apparently noticing the exchange; and it was not until she had listened with becoming gravity to his highly dramatic acknowledgments that the truth beamed upon her. She saw that he labored under the enchanting impression that she had been smitten by his appearance.

"Weally," said Blifkins, in sweet, poetic mood, "youah tender act touched me. Aw—it touched me deeply,—it did, 'pon honaw."

"Indeed, sir," replied the maiden, with charming naïveté, "there was no need of this gratitude on your part. As you stood beneath our portico you obstructed my view of a gentleman at an opposite window who had been observing me, and I sent the umbrella as the readiest means to *get rid of your unwelcome presence!*"

Blifkins went home, and broke up the old umbrella, and consigned its hated fragments to the ash barrel.

C.



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SCIENCE.

The most extraordinary stories have appeared in regard to the natural history discoveries made by the Australian eclipse expedition of December last, which, it will be remembered, failed to see the eclipse by reason of the cloudiness of the sky. Mr. Foord says they dredged up from the sea bottom a piece of coral, on which was found crawling a creature with the body of a fish, "but wonderful to relate, it had in the place of fins four legs, terminated by what you might call hands, by means of which it made its way rapidly over the coral reef. When placed on the sky-light of the steamer, the fish stood up on its four legs, a sight to behold!" We should think so. Fortunately this remarkable specimen has been preserved for scientific description. Another member of the party describes the rats on an island where they encamped, as "of every color from black to yellow, and some tortoise-shell." The discovery of four-handed fish and speckled rats ought to solace these gentlemen for the loss of the eclipse.

Professor Agassiz has written a long letter from South America, where he is now engaged in scientific explorations with the aid of the United States steamer *Hassler*, to Professor Benjamin Peirce, Superintendent of the coast survey, in which he describes his geological discoveries, and as a conclusion from them, says, "I am prepared to maintain that the whole southern extremity of the American continent has been uniformly moulded by a continuous sheet of ice. The great geological agents are not alone fire and water, as is universally admitted. Ice has had a great share in the work, and I believe this also will sooner or later be recognized with equal unanimity. I am well aware that my results will be questioned, and I shall be thought fanciful by geologists of all schools, as I have been at every step of my glacial researches. But an old hunter does not take the track of a fox for that of a wolf. I am an old hunter of glacial tracks, and know the footprint whenever I find it."

The statement concerning Dr. Livingstone, in the recent dispatch from the Governor of Bombay, that the great traveller intends to remain in the interior of Africa for the purpose of exploring a remarkable underground path there, is fully credited by Sir Henry C. Rawlinson, the President of the Royal Geographical Society. This path was thus described, on native authority, by Col. Grant, Speke's comrade: "The tunnel is six hours' journey in length, four hundred yards wide, high enough to allow camels to pass through, and with light all the way."

The Board of Health of one of the towns on Long Island has forbidden the use of fish as a fertilizer within a certain specified distance of residences, unless plowed in as soon as applied to the land; which indicates that the custom of allowing fish so used to lie upon the surface for some days must be deleterious to the health of persons in the vicinity. It is popularly believed, on many parts of Long Island, that residents of a district where the soil has been enriched with fish are more liable to be attacked by lockjaw, in the event of accident.

Signor Palmieri, the Italian professor who exposed himself to so much danger during the late eruption of Mount Vesuvius for the sake of scientific observation, asserts that volcanic lightnings do not occur without thunder. This is opposed to the statements of ancient historians in regard to Vesuvius.

The blue coloration of fishes was the subject of a note from M. G. Pouchet, recently read before the Paris Academy of Sciences, in which the author attributes to certain oval bodies beneath the skin, called by him "iridising bodies," the production of the blue color observed on many fishes.

The island of May, in the Frith of Forth, on the coast of Scotland, has recently been so overrun by ants as to destroy the value of the land occupied by the lighthouse keepers there, and an investigation of the matter has been ordered by the Lighthouse Commissioners.

During the height of the terrific storm at Madras, on the second of May last, in which nine ships were wrecked, as well as many smaller vessels, the velocity of the wind did not exceed fifty-three miles an hour.

Ozone investigations have been very numerous of late. M. Honzeau of Rouen claims to have discovered that its bleaching properties are superior even to those of chlorine.

It has been asserted in the Paris Academy of Sciences, though, as now appears, probably on insufficient data, that strychnine is an antidote for poisoning by hydrate of chloral.

As Professor Tyndall showed, in a recent lecture, it is quite a mistake to suppose that dark colors are always the best absorbers of heat, and light colors the worst.

A species of insect first discovered in the island of Malta about the year 1750 was never subsequently observed there until last year, when it was again found.

Henry Bessemer has received the Albert gold medal of the English Society of Arts, for his eminent services in developing the manufacture of steel.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. E. L. (Giles County, Tenn.) says: "Will you, in your answers to correspondents, inform me when and where the 'mad-stone' originated? We have had considerable excitement here by the appearance of several rabid dogs—*rabies canina*—during the last six months. During that time a citizen of our county has been selling what he calls 'mad-stones.' One of my neighbors bought one, and it is, I am confident, *wood*. It is about one inch square and one-fourth as thick, smooth, and of black color. Those having faith in its virtues assert that it will prevent hydrophobia, if applied to the wound of a person bitten by a rabid dog. They also claim that it will quickly cure the bite of the rattlesnake, and many other less important but no less miraculous virtues are claimed for it. I am a physician, and often meet with the advocates of the so-called mad-stone. I know it is a huge humbug, and that the only one likely to be benefited by it is the man selling it, for as long as there is superstition he will find purchasers. I have been unable to find any account of such a stone in any work, except in one of Sir Walter Scott's. He mentions a stone obtained as a ransom for one of the Infidel commanders during the crusades in the twelfth century, to which the ignorant and superstitious of that age attributed miraculous virtues in curing murrain in cattle. Any information you can give me about the origin of the mad-stone and its supposed virtues will be highly appreciated." We have never been able to find anything authentic on this subject, unless the declarations of correspondents who are not personally known to us can be considered authentic. We have published descriptions of the "mad-stone" by persons who claim to have seen it used to cure mad-dog and rattlesnake bites, and who professed to give names, places and dates, and the circumstances attending the application of the stone, which they claimed did prove efficacious. We must say, however, that we do not believe that the so-called mad-stone possesses the virtues claimed for it; and that, in our opinion, those who profess to have personal knowledge of its alleged powers are either themselves the victims of deception, or else are willing to help deceive others.

Perplexed (Baltimore) says: "I am now twenty-four years old. About three years ago I made the acquaintance of a young lady of this place, and was in her society for about three months, in which time I formed a deep attachment for her, which, as I then thought, she returned. I was called away very suddenly to California, and was detained there for two years and six months, during which time I never wrote to her, because I had never asked her permission. I then returned home, and one day I met her unexpectedly on the street. Knowing it is the duty of the lady to speak first, *I* did not speak, but passed on. I turned around, however, and noticed that she looked back. Since then I have met her several times—sometimes by herself, at other times with a young gentleman, and she always acts in the same way. Now I ask you, dear *Ledger*, what you think about the case." Under the circumstances, you need not hesitate to speak to her first. You may have changed so that she does not certainly recognize you, or she may imagine that you do not care to recognize her. The only sensible application of the rule that when a lady and gentleman meet in the street, the lady should bow or speak first, is to cases of fresh acquaintance; as, for example, when you meet a girl for the first time after the party at which you were introduced. Then you await her action, in order to know whether she desires to continue the acquaintance. But between old friends no such rule is observed.

Saturday says: "Like other people, I come to you for advice. My case is substantially as follows: I have been married a little over two years, and was married at nineteen years of age to a young lady in whom I placed the utmost confidence. Since I have been married, I have experienced the greatest unhappiness of my life. I have had constant employment at a salary of sixty dollars per month; our expenses are very light, and consequently we lay by something every month. We have one child. Now what I want to ask you is, is it right for a wife to be quarrelling with her husband about trivial matters, such as my going out at half-past seven o'clock and returning at a quarter past nine o'clock in the evening? When I get my salary every month, I hand it over to my wife, and when I ask her for a little money she offers me twenty-five cents. Do you think that right?" Your wife does seem to be a little hard on you, but when boys of nineteen rush into matrimony it is necessary for their wives to exercise strict control over them until they arrive at years of discretion. You must be a good boy, and by and by your wife, when she sees you can bear it, will allow you more freedom and pocket-money.

Commercial says: "For the first time I come to you for advice. I am a young man just verging into manhood, and have no one to advise me. Would it be possible for me, a stranger, to find employment in a commercial house in your city? I have a good education, have graduated at a first-class business college, and believe I have the elements in me for a man of business; but the trouble is, I have no friends to provide or assist me to a situation, and I have had no experience in the business; but if I could once get a position, however humble, I should strive to rise by merit only. Does a man lose the right to vote if he removes from one State to another just on the eve of election? I know he cannot vote in the State to which he removes, but could he not vote at his former residence?" The only way it can be determined whether or not you could get a situation in this city would be to try the experiment, and see what would come of it. The chances would be against you, but you might succeed. A man cannot vote in a State from which he has removed.

Meta Granelle (Hartford) writes: "I have seen such quantities of good advice in your correspondents' column that I venture to seek some for myself. I am eighteen years of age—quite old enough to think of supporting myself. I have a good father, but he is getting on in years, and I wish to help him. I have thought some of studying phonography. Would you advise me to give sufficient time and learn it? If you do not favor this, what do you think of my learning to be a book-keeper? Any other advice that you will be kind enough to give will be very gratefully received." Your desire to assist your father is very praiseworthy. One of the most appropriate occupations for a young girl is that of a telegraph operator, and as you are not too old to learn it, if you begin at once, it would probably be better for you than either of the pursuits which you mention.

Ina has a friend who visits her, and acts as if he loved her, but has never said outright, "I love you." They correspond, and he has often written to her that he cared for her, and calls himself a true friend. She says, "He tries to please me in every respect. He was engaged to a young lady about two years ago. She broke off the engagement on account of evil reports that were circulated about him, but she and her friends are now extremely anxious to renew it. He and the young lady have begun correspondence, and yet he still visits me, acting as formerly. Is it right and honorable for him to act so toward me? for his actions are those of a lover, and not a friend." He is evidently a tricky, dishonorable person, and you should have nothing to do with him.

W. R. B. says: "I love a young girl about the same age as myself—seventeen years. She says she wants me to go to college and return in two years, and that then she will marry me. Don't you think, if she loves me as much as that, she will marry me whether I attend college or not?" Your friend is evidently a sensible girl, who has more regard for your welfare than you yourself exhibit. No, we do not think she will be as ready to marry you if you disregard her wise request, for her estimate of your affection will of course be greatly influenced by your apparent readiness to comply with her wishes, or the reverse. Follow her advice, and you will not be likely to regret it.

Texan.—"I sent one of my men out to my barnyard to shoot a turkey," writes this correspondent, "and the bullet from his rifle, after taking off the turkey's head, passed on and went into the head of a horse that a neighbor happened to be driving along the road with, in front of my place. The horse was killed, and my neighbor says that I must pay for him. I don't see it in that light. He of course took his own risks. I have a right to shoot my turkeys, haven't I?" Yes; but in shooting them you are bound to take care not to shoot your neighbors' horses; and if you do not, you will have to pay for all the horses you, or your servants, kill by such negligence as you describe.

Constant Reader (Brooklyn) writes: "A gentleman spent the evening with me not long since, and during our conversation made use of the following quotation: 'There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them as we may.' I corrected him, and said it was not divinity, but destiny. Now will you be kind enough to give me the correct quotation, and name of the author?" The lines to which you refer were written by Shakespeare, and occur in the second scene of the fifth act of *Hamlet*, as follows:

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will."

J. Wilson (Philadelphia) writes: "Will you please tell me, in your answers to correspondents, whether, in engraving initials on a wedding present, those of the gentleman or lady should be placed first?" The present fashion, we believe, is to engrave wedding presents with a monogram, composed only of the initial letters of the lady's maiden name. If, however, it was desired for any reason to put on those of both parties, we should place the gentleman's first.

Poultney (Vermont) asks us to inform him through the answers to correspondents what is meant by Postal Cards, and what is their object. They are stamped cards issued and sold by the government, on which messages and letters may be written and transmitted through the mails at lower rates of postage than when inclosed in envelopes. They are now used in England, and are soon to be issued in this country, under a law passed at the last session of Congress.

Bion writes: "When a gentleman is introduced to a lady, and the lady makes such remarks as 'I am happy to meet you,' or 'I'm glad to make your acquaintance,' what should the gentleman say in return? Second—When a young man accompanies a young lady to church, which should enter first?" He should say, "I thank you; I am most happy to make yours." Second—He should enter the church first, and preceding her to the pew, open the door and politely show her in.

A. B. C. writes: "Recently a lady and gentleman were married. The lady's father and mother were first cousins, and the gentleman's mother and lady's mother were sisters. What was the relationship existing between the parties before marriage?" They were first cousins simply, from their mothers being sisters. We cannot see that the fact that her father and mother were cousins had any effect upon the relationship between her and her husband.

Anxious, in asking us to answer a question, adds: "I am in pocket fifty cents, or out of pocket fifty cents, according to your answer." Inasmuch as we decidedly disapprove of betting, and do not wish to have even an indirect share in the determination of a wager, we must decline to give the information which you desire.

Constant Reader (Providence) asks: "Who, in your judgment, will be the next President of these United States?" Either Ulysses S. Grant or Horace Greeley.

Old Regular Soldier says: "Some three years ago, from the fact that I had considerable experience in the War Department at Washington, I collected a claim for one of the citizens of this place, who had been a colonel in one of the nine months organizations, for pay due for services rendered, amounting to about eight hundred dollars. This claim accrued prior to 1863, and from the fact that no application had been made before 1867 for its payment, it was necessary to furnish information, and give every satisfaction to the Department in regard to the justice of the claim. This caused a great deal of trouble and extra expense. The colonel received his check, but made no offer of any reimbursement for the outlay which I had incurred. And lately, when I asked him for the small sum expended in collecting the claim, the answer I received was, that as I did not demand the expense at the time it was made, my asking for it now 'shows that I am animated by a vindictive feeling!' Now the actual expense of collecting the claim would cost ten times the outlay I made. And I wish to ask if I can sue and recover for the commission that the colonel would have had to pay to an agent for such services, admitting that I had not at that time, nor since then, paid any license to the government for acting as a claim agent." If you and the colonel made any agreement as to what you should have for your services, then you are entitled to the sum agreed upon. If there was no agreement, then you are entitled to whatever sum would be reasonable, or according to custom in such matters. The fact that you have paid no license to the government as a claim agent would not invalidate your claim against the colonel, but it would expose you to a fine under the Internal Revenue law, if you have really been carrying on business as a claim agent without a license.

Matter of Fact Lover is a young man of twenty-two, in love with a young lady who is beautiful, amiable, accomplished, and heiress apparent to $150,000. She reciprocates in a great measure, but her father objects to our correspondent's political opinions, saying that his daughter shall never marry any one who entertains such views; upon which the young man writes: "As I bear, in a financial point of view, a very strong resemblance to 'Job's turkey,' I am by no means averse to the emoluments which the possession of $150,000 would insure. On the contrary, I cannot dispense with the fortune if I marry the young lady. This is my dilemma. How shall I act?" The young lady's father might find other than political opinions to object to in this nice young man. He will continue to remain in his present impecunious condition, so far as any advice of ours is concerned which might aid him in securing the hand of a girl whom he evidently does not deserve. The cool frankness of his letter, however, is worthy of commendation. We like to see a man write just as he feels.

Inquirer, of Bellefontaine, O., says: "Will you please inform me whether a person could recover the amount of a fraud perpetrated by a C. O. D. at the express office, if after discovering the fraud he should apply to the express agent before he had forwarded the money to the expresser? The fraud was committed by a reputed firm of New York, who advertised aluminum watches at $4.00. I sent and got a circular, and everything seemed all right and *bona fide*; but it is needless to say that children's toys came in place of a watch warranted to run one year. The audacious rascals even had the impudence to request a further order. Please expose the whole thing as a vile cheat. Different from most other bogus companies, they have a first-class penman for correspondence, and their printing is of the best styles." If you had discovered the cheat in time, you could have procured a legal process restraining the express agent from paying over the money to the swindlers, and the court, on learning the facts, would have ordered the money to be restored to you.

A. C. R. says: "Suppose a person owns a piece of land bordering on the street, and this land is protected by a stone-wall, and the town sees fit to widen this street; now I would like to inquire who has to pay the expense of moving the wall, the owner or the town? As I am a constant reader of your valuable paper, you would oblige me much by answering as soon as convenient in your Notices to Correspondents." Your question is not put very plainly. If the street widening should take in the wall, the town would have to go to the expense of removing it. That is to say, if the town wanted the land occupied by the wall to form a portion of the street, they would have to clear the wall off. Such matters often depend on the local facts of the case—the tenure by which the owner holds his land abutting on the streets, the rights of the corporation in streets, and as to the widening of them, etc. If it is a matter of much consequence to you, you should see just what the facts are, and then lay them before a lawyer of the neighborhood for his opinion.

Amos S. (Danbury, Conn.) says: "I wish to inquire if you can give me any information in regard to raising trout. I have commenced the business the natural way, and wish to go on in a correct manner." According to the report of a committee appointed last year in Massachusetts to investigate the subject of fish culture, the 'natural way' of raising trout is the best way for persons of small means, and also for those who have neither scientific nor practical knowledge of the business. The main point is to have a separate pond for the young trout, so they will not be devoured by the old ones. You must also keep a sharp look-out for eels, frogs and other creatures that are fond of fish diet, and which prefer young trout to any other breed of swimmers. Inquire at the bookstores for works on fish culture and trout raising, and read up on the subject as you have leisure, letting your study go hand in hand with your practice, and thus you will fit yourself to extend your fish-ponds with safety and profit.

Alice (Detroit) writes: "Having seen in the columns of your most interesting paper such excellent advice to girls whose hearts have been pierced by Cupid's dart, I thought I would write to you and ask your aid in my present dilemma. A young man of prepossessing manners and good looks has often asked my hand in marriage. He is not wealthy, but is honest and industrious, and earns enough, and more than enough, to support a wife. I love him very much, and I know he loves me, for he has often said so. But my parents object to having me marry him, on the ground that I can do better by marrying a wealthy old bachelor, who, after paying me considerable attention for six months, has proposed to me. But I cannot think of parting with the one I love, and selling myself for gold." Money, if a consideration in marriage, should always be a secondary one. You should not "sell yourself for gold," but try to win your parents over to your way of thinking.

Woodville (Kentucky) writes: "Will you please explain what is meant by the terms 'wooden,' 'silver' and 'golden' weddings, as applied to anniversaries of marriage? I have asked several persons how much time must elapse before they respectively occur, but have never received a satisfactory answer." The fifth anniversary of the marriage-day is known as the wooden wedding; the twenty-fifth, as the silver wedding; and the fiftieth as the golden wedding. The names are derived, we believe, from the character of the presents to the happy couple which are deemed appropriate for the celebration of the respective occasions. Comparatively few persons live to see their golden wedding-day; but there is a well-known citizen of New York who not only celebrated his with great display a few years since, but has lived to marry again.

Enquirer, (Clinton Hollow.)—To "water" stock is to dilute or lessen its value by increasing the number of shares without making corresponding additions to the value of the property which the stock represents. For example: Suppose a railroad to be worth $50,000,000, and to have a capital stock to that amount, so that the road, if sold at auction, would bring enough to pay the stockholders dollar for dollar. Then suppose the directors of the road should double the number of shares of stock, making its capital $100,000,000, without in reality adding a dollar to the value of the road. In that case, the stock would be "watered," or weakened, so that a share of it would be only half as "strong," or valuable, as it was before.

Percival Rust (Philadelphia) writes: "I wish to ask if you think it would be advisable for me to leave school when I am within eighteen months of graduating, if I have a good situation opened to me. I would also like to have you tell me if you think a young man nearly seventeen is old enough to pay attentions to a young lady." If your means enable you to remain at school, continue there until you graduate. Every one should obtain the best education within his power. It is wisest for young men of seventeen not to think too much of the girls. Thoughts of that sort have been known to interfere with their studies.

School-Girl (Chicago) says: "I am attending school, and I study grammar. One of the rules of my grammar is, '*An* should be used before a vowel sound, and *a* before a consonant sound.' In the story in your paper, 'The Voodoo Doctor,' 'an' is used before 'historical.' Is this correct?" Yes. *An* is properly used not only before a vowel sound, as your grammar tells you, but also before *h sounded*, when the accent of the word falls on any syllable except the first: thus good modern English writers invariably use *an* instead of *a* before the word *historical*.

E. W. (New York) asks: "Does a Lieutenant-General outrank a General? or, in other words, which is the highest, Lieutenant-General or General?" There are four grades of general officers in the United States Army: first, General; second, Lieutenant-General; third, Major-General; and fourth, Brigadier-General. They rank in the order we have mentioned, General being the highest. In the British army there are still higher officers known as Field Marshals, but there is no such grade as Brigadier-General.

Blanche (Nashville) says: "I have lately married a widower, whom I, of course, desire to please, and it puzzles me to know by what name to call his deceased wife. An answer will greatly oblige an anxious wife." If you were acquainted with her, use the same name you applied to her when living. Otherwise, adopt the designation under which your husband speaks of her; or, if that seems too intimate, call her simply Mrs. ——, substituting your husband's surname for the blank.

Kathleen (Brooklyn) says: "I desire your opinion on a subject that has been a great source of argument between myself and others for some time. I contend that, if two gentlemen are walking together, and they meet a lady with whom one of them is acquainted, it is polite for *both* to bow, the stranger as well as the acquaintance." You are quite right.

Claude D. (Baltimore) writes: "Will you please inform me, through your interesting 'Notices to Correspondents,' how one can prevent himself from perspiring freely?" We should advise, in view of the temperature experienced here this summer, a permanent residence at the North Pole.

George Richardson, Pensioner, (town of Niagara, Ontario,) writes to us that he thinks he is the missing brother referred to by James R., of Marietta, Ohio, in the correspondent columns of the *Ledger* for July 29th, 1872, and wishes James R. to send him his full address.

A Constant Reader of Five Years asks: "Is it proper for a gentleman to congratulate a young lady on her engagement?" Yes; if he tells the truth in so doing. A neglect of this courtesy on the part of a friend would certainly be wondered at by most girls.

⁂ *Several letters stand over to be answered in our next.*